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**China in Britain in the Interwar Period: Bertrand Russell,
W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Shih-I Hsiung**

By

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of China and the Chinese in Britain in the interwar period. It selects key writers and texts that demonstrate the importance of genre, location and subjectivity in the imagination of China. This thesis tries to demonstrate that the genre of travel report and the Chinese subjectivity intervene in our rethinking of the relations between British modernism and China and of the very concept of modernism itself. Borrowing from recent theoretical discussions of transnationalism, this thesis looks at how the transnational flow of people, ideas and texts between Britain and China helps us identify modes of thinking of Sino-British relations beyond modernism-orientalism or imperialism-nationalism patterns. It argues for the interactive nature or mutual influence within the cultural contact zone by highlighting the role of the cultural translator or agency in the claim of cultural equivalence or transnational solidarity. I examine the ways in which Russell, Auden and Isherwood interact with and represent Chinese intellectuals to critique capitalism and imperialism. I also look at their ethical dilemmas in their cross-cultural and cross-class representations of the Chinese coolies and lower-classes that reflect how the establishment of socialist transnational solidarity has to face class and national barriers. I also examine the British Chinese writer Shih-I Hsiung's position as cultural translator in both the British and the Chinese contexts and how his works are a response to this inequality. To sum up, this study of the historical cross-border production, circulation and reception of these writers in question aims to demonstrate the interactivity in the cultural contact zone. It contributes to our rethinking of the Euro-centric notion of modernism and of the Western influence/local reception mode of cross-cultural relations. It argues for the positivity of the contact zone in which transnational solidarity is imagined in multiple ways to combat various forms of unequal power relations.

Introduction

Britain and China—towards a Transnational Connection

For the Chinese question is no longer a local problem, but a great world-issue which statesmen must regulate by conferences in which universal principles will be vindicated if they wish permanently to eliminate what is almost the last remaining international powder-magazine. A China that is henceforth not only admitted to the family of nations on terms of equality but welcomed as a representative of Liberalism and a subscriber to all those sanctions on which the civilization of peace rests, will directly tend to adjust every other Asiatic problem and to prevent a recrudescence of those evil phenomena which are the enemies of progress and happiness. Is it too much to dream of such a consummation? We think not. It is to America and to England that China looks to rehabilitate herself and to make her Republic a reality.

Putnam Weale, *The Fight for the Republic in China* (1917)¹

For the England which is uppermost in the minds of all Chinese is the “Great England,” the land of wealth and power, the heart of an immense empire, and the country which produces the best foreign goods in China....

Now my own interest in this direction was the result of a unique personal experience. About two or three years before I sailed for England I had a remarkable dream. At that time I had read a good deal about King

¹ Putnam Weale, *The Fight for the Republic in China*, 390-1. Putnam Weale is the pen name of Bertram Lenox Simpson, a British journalist and publisher who was born in the Chinese treaty port Ningbo and lived and worked in Republican China.

Edward VII and his trips to the Continent in the interests of international peace and friendliness. The role of this great King as a peace-maker aroused my keenest admiration....

Min-Ch'ien T. Z. Tyau, *London Through Chinese Eyes* (1920)²

Imagined associations

In 1901, the Cambridge history scholar and member of the Bloomsbury group, Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, published *Letters from John Chinaman*. In the book, a pseudo-Chinese narrator writes to his intended British reader in first-person narrative, celebrating Chinese civilization as a Confucian, agricultural and idyllic utopia while criticizing the industrial and commercial civilization of the West. *Letters* illustrates what David Porter defines as “modernist chinoiserie”, the modernist manifestation of chinoiserie, which refers to the long European tradition of imagining and inventing China by contact with Chinese material culture that dates back to the period of the Enlightenment.³ *Letters* inherits from the 18th-century chinoiserie tradition in both form and content: the “cosmopolitan epistolary style, an early form what Goethe would call *Weltliteratur* in the early nineteenth century” (Tong 160) and the “civilizational model for thinking about cultural difference” (Porter, “China and the Formation” 27). What, however, distinguishes Dickinson’s modernist reworking from its 18th-century legacy is Dickinson’s different rhetoric for civilizational comparison. His depiction of the Chinese civilizational other aims to

² Min-Ch'ien T. Z. Tyau, *London Through Chinese Eyes*, 17. Min-Ch'ien Tyau, or Diao Minqian was a Chinese student studying law in London between 1909 and 1916 and later served in the government of the Republic of China.

³ See Tong Qingsheng, “Towards a Common Civilization: G. Lewis Dickinson, China, and Global Humanism” and David Porter, “China and the Formation of the Modernist Aesthetic Ideal”.

contradict the European self rather than to seek proofs of universality in Enlightenment's cosmopolitan outlook. Modernist chinoiserie, therefore, becomes "a transhistorical pastiche of aesthetic attitudes" and represents "what Europe has lost" in the historical process of industrialization and imperial expansion in the nineteenth century (32, 30). Both the eighteenth-century chinoiserie and Dickinson's modernist version demonstrate China's importance as "adaptive strategies that are themselves potentially transformative" in cross-cultural borrowings ("Beyond the Bounds" 157).

A less popular text written by Dickinson about China, *An Essay on the Civilisations of India, China & Japan* (1914), differs from the previous text both in form and content. It is Dickinson's travel report based on his journey to India, China and Japan between 1912 and 1913. When in *Letters* Dickinson stresses on civilizational difference, if not civilizational confrontation, between Europe and China, in his travel report a decade later, he seeks to establish cultural equivalence: Confucianism corresponds to Western rationalism, and China's traditional education system (which was abolished in 1905) that creates literary scholars and opens up equal opportunities for upward social mobility equates to Western democracy.⁴ Underneath this rhetorical change lies the fact that, in the wake of the 1911 Revolution, republican China replaced the Manchu regime, which had served to be a rather consistent political and cultural entity for Britain's imagination of China from the seventeenth century to the first decade of the twentieth century. This social transformation creeps into the narrative voice of Dickinson in the travel report. The complacent and triumphant pseudo-Chinese narrator in *Letters* is replaced by an uneasy British traveller to China, who faces not simply a political change but more

⁴ See Dickinson, *An Essay on the Civilizations of India, China and Japan*, pp. 42-63.

importantly the denunciation of Chinese Confucian civilization by the Americanized revolutionary leaders of the republic.⁵ The Confucian utopia, or the aesthetic invention of China as an ancient and unchanging civilization, stopped functioning as a stable signifier for British experiences with modern China.

In a different scenario in 1952, the Euro-Asian writer Han Suyin (pen name of Elizabeth Comber) got her autobiographical fiction, *A Many-Splendoured Thing*, published by the British publishing house Jonathan Cape. Against the background of another dramatic political transition in China in 1949 when the communist revolution leaves diminishing room for alternative choices of identity, the geographical travel of its female protagonist by the same name between Britain, China and colonial Hong Kong becomes Suyin's conscious method to reconcile with her mixed identity and to answer her question whether East and West can ever meet. Interracial love provides a way in which she reexamines the legacy of the East-West encounter beyond the binary opposition of colonialism and nationalism. The acceptance of love results from Suyin's acceptance of herself as a Eurasian, an identification that seeks for coexistence of Chinese and European heritages rather than simply reducing them to representing opposite ideological abstractions:

Being Eurasian is not being born of East and West. It is a state of mind. A state of mind created by false values, prejudice, ignorance, and the evils of colonialism. We must get rid of that state of mind.... The meeting of both cultures, the fusion of all that can become a world civilization. (263)

What, then, is Suyin's interpretation of "a world civilization"? To her, it is founded on liberalism, or the virtue of forbearance and toleration. She thinks of

⁵ See Dickinson, *An Essay on the Civilizations of India, China and Japan*, 42-63.

liberalism not as an exclusively Western concept which is only a received foreign ideology in China, but as having multiple origins that include Confucian doctrines from traditional Chinese culture. To Suyin, who is born into the transnational connection of people and ideas between China and the West in the early 20th century, her Chinese “root” already entails “the Chinese *me* and the English *you* as well as all the other *us*” (119). Her return to Chungking (Chongqing), one-time capital city of wartime China, from colonial Hong Kong is not a return to a pure tradition or a firm root. Instead, it aims to establish cultural equivalence between China and the West by receiving Confucian virtue and Western liberal spirit as shared cultural heritage, as Dickinson does in his travel report. To writer Han Suyin, autobiographical writing provides “an expressive venue for the self-creation and fulfillment of the modern individual” (Ng 9).

A contemporary review of the novel in *Times Literary Supplement* criticizes the book for presenting too much “vague, high-minded, rather pretentious Western liberalism” and too little “practical grasp of the realities of the political situation in the Far East” (Hall, “Reality and Myth” 401). The reviewer’s juxtaposition of Western concept and Eastern reality brings up two important issues regarding the form of autobiography. The demand for “realities” tend to bound the autobiographer and the textual subject to the “world of referential immediacy”, forgetting that the emphasis in the reading of autobiography “is not on discovering *what* is represented, but *how* and *why*” it is represented (Ng 11). The assumption that Eurasian authors writing on Far Eastern issues should present “realities” rather than imitating “Western liberalism” falls into the usual prejudice that regards the East-West relationship as one between theory and reality, or between metropolitan interpreter and local interlocutor. This review article helps us recover historical British

expectations of how China should be represented, particularly when it is self-representation by the Chinese. Han's novel, however, challenges these assumptions by demonstrating that ideas travel in both ways.

At the starting and ending points of the Republic of China (1911 and 1949), Dickinson and Han address similar potentialities for the relationship between Britain and China. Both seek to establish cultural equivalence as a corrective to the unequal political and economic international order. In face of an incipient Chinese republic and its uncertain place in the changing international community, Dickinson's call for cultural understanding aims not only to restore China's equal status but also to resist the overwhelming triumph of industrialization. Amid the growing ideological tension between colonialism and nationalism that finally leads to the Cold War, meanwhile, Han looks back to the republican era for cultural inspiration and insists that freedom and toleration serve as the foundation of transnational solidarity. Both of these writers speak in a contact zone in which circulation of texts and ideas about China and the Anglo-Chinese relations is double-way rather than one-dimensional. Writers of both Britain and China contribute to textual representations of China in English. Such representations, as these texts reflect, take on a patent cosmopolitan outlook and reveal its complex relationship to Britain and China's physical and geopolitical relations in this particular historical period.

Modes of Reading: Why China matters?

In their introduction to *Sinographies: Writing China* (2007), Eric Hayot, Haunt Saussy, and Steven G. Yao jointly propose a way of reading China:

Any description of China, However modest in its ambitions, participates to some degree in the writing of “China,” in the construction of a written subject whose meaning reflects certain aspects of the real but also frames the process of knowing that motivates it and gives it life. Sinographies acknowledges the fact that China is written. It attends, however, not to the end result but to the writing process, and to the ways in which that process (style, trope, plot, figure, vocabulary, pidgin, example) does not simply reflect thought but is the stuff of thought itself. “China” is not something one thinks about but something one thinks through; it is a provocation; it realizes itself variously as subject, process and end of articulate thinking. (x-xi)

Written China’s importance to Britain in particular, as many literary scholars have demonstrated, lasts from the seventeenth all the way through to the early twentieth century.⁶ Robert Markley argues that in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, “the confrontation of English writers with China and Japan became a catalyst for their recognition that the discourse of European empire was an ideological construct- part self-conscious propaganda, part wish fulfillment, and part econometric extrapolation to sustain fantasies of commercial prosperity, if not imperial conquest” (9). This historicization of Britain’s China discourse in the cultural sphere echoes the new paradigm in history studies that restores China’s central status in modern world economy before its domination by the British and

⁶ See, for example, Robert Markley, *The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1730* (2006); Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins, *A Taste for China: English Subjectivity and the Prehistory of Orientalism* (2013) (on the eighteenth century); David Porter, *The Chinese Taste in Eighteenth-Century England* (2010); Elizabeth Hope Chang, *Britain’s Chinese Eye: Literature, Empire, and Aesthetic in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2010); Ross Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined* (2013); Anne Witchard, ed, *British Modernism and Chinoiserie* (2015); Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism, and China* (2003).

European empires from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.⁷ Studies of the cultural significance of eighteenth-century British chinoiserie enable literary scholars to seek for an “Enlightenment orientalism” that breaks away from the “strictly binary Saidian orientalism” (Jenkins 9), or to avoid the danger of “reading too much of the Victorian era’s imperial triumphalism” back into the eighteenth century (Porter, *Chinese Taste*, 6). However, even Victorian imagination of the Anglo-Chinese relations is not in a singular discursive form. As Ross Forman has aptly demonstrated, location plays a crucial role in Victorians’ imagination of China and Britain’s relationship to her. Their written Chinas correspond to different ways of imagining British imperialism at different locations.⁸

The revived fancy for traditional Chinese material culture and aesthetics in the early twentieth century, or “modernist chinoiserie” as Porter describes it, constitutes an important but not exhaustive way in which Britain understood China in this period. When and where Britain meets China, which China, or through whose point of view China is examined are all important questions we need ask to distinguish between different narratives about China and reasons of their formation, as Dickinson’s two texts demonstrate. When Porter talks about modernist chinoiserie, he is thinking of the relationship of Bloomsbury modernism to chinoiserie. More specifically, he is thinking of representations of Manchu China by Dickinson in *Letters* (1901) and Lytton Strachey in *A Son of Heaven* (1912), a melodrama about the Qing court of the Manchu regime in its final struggles to stay in power. “Modernism” here is confined to a rather limited and elite group of British subjects,

⁷ See, for example, Kenneth Pomeranz’s *The great divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy* (2000).

⁸ See Ross Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined* (2013); see also, for example, Robert Bickers, *Britain in China: Community, Culture and Colonialism, 1900-1949* (1999).

while “chinoiserie” potentially obscures other forms of encounter between Britain and China in this period and perpetuates the image of China in its tradition and past. As a consequence, modernist chinoiserie registers the type of East-West encounter which, to a certain extent, confines itself to a relationship between subject/object, (Western) modernity/(Chinese) tradition.

This thesis reconsiders the connotation of “modernism” and examines ways of encounter between Britain and China beyond the chinoiserie pattern. Susan Friedman’s method to spacialize historical periodization sets modernity and modernism free from their Eurocentric yoke, demonstrating that “each manifestation of modernity is distinctive and yet affiliated through global linkages to other modernities or societal formations” (“Periodizing Modernism” 434). In *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, modernism, and China* (2003), Patricia Laurence illustrates how a particular form of “global linkages” was established between Britain’s Bloomsbury group and China’s Crescent Moon group via correspondence, travel, love affair and friendship. Their mutual indebtedness demonstrates the international dimension of modernist forms both in Britain and China. Their private relationship connects to the broader socio-political background of the early twentieth century by the political significance of their “apolitical” stance. Laurence insists on both groups’ oppositional position—“pacifism in Bloomsbury during World War I and detachment from the polemics of communists in the Crescent Moon group”—to resist mainstream political discourse of British imperialism and Chinese nationalism (20).⁹

⁹ This method in reading early-twentieth-century ideological background into aesthetic and individualistic literary expressions is not fully satisfactory precisely because, by establishing a logical equivalence between British imperialism and Chinese nationalism, Laurence leaves the densely occupied discursive space of imperialism and nationalism unexamined without explaining how the latter differs from the former as ideology and in practical use in history. Even though Laurence’s study attends to both literary groups, her primary focus is on the Bloomsbury group and British modernism.

It is this sense of resistance through transnational connection that associates writers and texts under my observation, though what they resist and how they establish solidarity may vary. There are two types of texts analyzed in this thesis. The first type is by those British writers who are categorized by Laurence as “socialists” and “travellers”. I demonstrate that such labels as “travellers” and “socialists” correspond to specific sensibilities, literary genres, and methods in thinking through China about Britain that at the same time connect to but differ from the two literary groups mentioned earlier. They break through aesthetic transnationalism and modernist chinoiserie’s primary attention to traditional Chinese culture. They present China as a complicated combination of tradition and modernity and Chinese issues as closely intertwined with issues at home. They demonstrate that discussion of imperialism and nationalism in these discourses’ cross-cultural circulation, translation, and reception resists a binary thinking of Anglo-Chinese relations as confrontation between British imperialism and Chinese nationalism.

The second type of texts consists of English writings on China by the Chinese. These auto-ethnographic self-expressions are important sites where Chinese voices made themselves heard directly by an English audience and potentially challenged clichés about China and the Chinese. For instance, the private relationship between Bloomsbury and Crescent Moon groups led to the publication of the Chinese writer Ling Shuhua’s autobiographical fiction *Ancient Melodies* by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press in 1953. The book’s narration of Ling’s growing-up experience in republican China’s struggle between modernity and tradition demonstrated to her English reader that “the struggle between modernizing and traditionalizing forces within a given society is itself a defining characteristic of modernity” (Friedman, “Periodizing Modernism” 433). Representation of the upper-

class and cultured female character in modern China also challenged Western stereotypes of the Chinese in Fu Manchu- or Amah-like figures.

Material and Imagined Linkages between Britain and China in the Early Twentieth Century

In *Imperialism: A Study* (1902), arguably one of the earliest academic studies of imperialism and an important reference for Lenin's analysis of Britain in *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1916), British economist John Atkinson Hobson thus analyzes the nature of imperialism in the case of China:

The conduct of European Powers towards China will rank as the clearest revelation of the nature of Imperialism. Until late in the nineteenth century Great Britain, with France as a poor second, had made the pace in pursuit of trade, covering this trading policy with a veneer of missionary work, the real relative importance of the two being put to a crucial test by the opium war. The entrance of Germany and America upon a manufacturing career, and the occidentation of Japan, enhanced the mercantile competition, and the struggle for the Far Eastern markets became a more definite object of national industrial policy. The next stage was the series of forceful moves by which France, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, and Japan have fastened their political and economic fangs into some special portion of the body of China by annexation, sphere of influence, or special treaty rights... (306-7)

The treaty port system in this semi-colonial condition provides the contact space where Britain and China met. Somerset Maugham traveled among treaty ports in China in 1920 and drew portraits of various British expatriates living and working there in *On a Chinese Screen* (1922). He takes pleasure in the book to satirize the

superiority mentality of the British by juxtaposing them with the Chinese coolies, thus revealing the most blatant racial and class difference in the semi-colonial space. Almost at the same time Bertrand Russell was in China teaching and giving lectures. In *The Problem of China*, also published in 1922, Russell proposes two possibilities for China's future: either China becomes industrialized, turns into another imperialist power, and joins in the imperialist powers' competition for profits; or China has to wait for Western powers to adopt socialism so as to eradicate the origin of Western (and the Japanese) powers' competition in China.¹⁰ This proposal is as analytical in revealing imperialism's nature as it is metaphorical in displaying the two confrontational categories of imperialism and socialism. Even though Russell's proposal for China, like Dickinson's concept of global governance, leaves China's subjectivity in the creation of this new order ambiguous, collectively, these writers demonstrate that China was crucial in the early twentieth century for British intellectuals, not in the form of chinoiserie but as a political and social entity that connected to Britain through global market and international politics, willingly or unwillingly. More importantly, China was equally important to them metaphorically to recognize, analyse and challenge inequalities within that system.

From the sense of injustice to the demand for alliance, geopolitical relations played a significant role in the re-envisioning of China and Anglo-Chinese relations, particularly with regard to the expansion of Japan. Putnam Weale's 1917 call for the incorporation of the Republic of China in the world of Anglo-American liberalism was in direct response to a series of Japanese demands in China for more rights, which threatened Britain and America's vested interests in China and challenged the existing British- and American-led international order in the Far East. Tyau dreamed

¹⁰ See Russell, *The Problem of China*, 9-20.

of King Edward VII as the symbol of international peace at a time when the 1919 Paris Peace Conference ceded Germany's interests in China's Shantung (Shandong) Province to Japan. In 1938, in face of Japan's growingly aggressive activities in China from North to South, Carl Crow, the American businessman and writer living in Shanghai, spoke for the Chinese to his Western, especially American, reader in faith of "triumph of right over might" (123). Crow finishes his propaganda book *I Speak for the Chinese* (1938) by questioning the limit of Japan's military aggression, "After China, what?" (133). The rhetoric to ally China and the West for a common defence against Japan reflects the growing sense of uneasiness about another possible world war.

Transnational traffic between Britain and China in this period is equally cultural and educational as it is political and economic. Russell was invited and funded by the Government University of Peking to lecture on philosophy between 1920 and 1921 to satisfy the "very earnest desire among our [Chinese] young to know the tendencies of the recent philosophy and science," thus writes Fu Tong, lecturer in Philosophy at the Government University, in his invitation letter.¹¹ Fu sent the invitation to Russell via British philosopher John Henry Muirhead who taught Fu philosophy at the University of Birmingham.¹² Underneath this private liaison lies China's national scheme of sending students overseas for "Western learning". Legitimization of "Western learning" was institutionalized through the establishment of modern universities and disciplines.¹³ Tyau studied law. Hsu Chi-mo, poet of the Crescent Moon group who befriended Dickinson and Russell, studied economics and

¹¹ See Fu Tong's letter to J. H. Muirhead. From the Russell Archives.

¹² See Muirhead's letter to Russell, May 31 1920. From the Russell Archives.

¹³ For the history of this modern cultural encounter between the West and China, see Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815-1937*.

literature. Meanwhile, Britain's growing interests in China led to a larger demand for Chinese courses. Chinese writers like Lao She, Chiang Yee and Shih-I Hsiung taught at the School of Oriental Studies at different points in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁴

1930s and early 1940s saw a growing number of Western journalists and documentary film makers flooding into China to report the Sino-Japanese War. They become important agents to transmit images of contemporary China back to a home audience in an effort to connect. Carl Crow's depiction of Chinese city dwellers in *Four Hundred Million Customers* (1937), Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley's portrayal of communists in Northwestern China in *Red Star over China* (1937) and *China Fights Back* (1938) respectively, and Pearl Buck's Chinese peasants in *The Good Earth* (1931) presented a variety of Chinese images for Western understanding of China. Transmission of Chinese images to the West also took the form of documentary, as in the Dutch director Joris Ivens's *The 400 Million* (1938) and in the American director Frank Capra's *The Battle of China* (1944). Chinese writers also contributed to transmitting new images of China to the West and seeking for transnational alliance. Chiang Yee's "The Silent traveller" series drew sketches of Britain and the British from his Chinese perspective. Shih-I Hsiung reappropriated traditional Chinese cultural materials to respond to contemporary East-West relations. Hsiao Ch'ien, as a Chinese war reporter in Europe, wrote to his Western reader that his country was *China but Not Cathay* (1944). They all function as cultural agents in the transmission of Chinese images to Britain.

Contact Space and Cultural Agency

¹⁴ See Anne Witchard's *Lao She in London* (1912), Diana Yeh's *The Happpy Hsiungs: China and the Struggle for Modernity* (2014), and Da Zheng's *Chiang Yee: the Silent traveller from the East: a Cultural Biography* (2010).

This thesis examines the role of these cultural agents in their travel in between cultures. I benefit from global history studies in identifying the importance of agency. Jurgen Osterhammel uses the concept of “informal empire” to challenge the older (usually Eurocentric) “action-response” theory in describing the economic relationship at both ends of imperialism, asking “where, when, how and to what effect did which extraneous forces impinge upon the indigenous socio-economic system? Through what mechanisms were world market influences transmitted to the Chinese economy and so on?” (295). The paradigm of informal empire’s emphasis on transmission underlines the importance of agents (both foreign and local) in establishing cross-cultural equivalence.

The method in this study of economic history and business relations equally applies to the cultural sphere, where the relationship between Britain and China does not have to manifest itself through the binary opposition between Western theory and Chinese practice, which presumes a Western origin of meaning making. As Tani Barlow argues with regard to the concept of “colonial modernity”, there is no European modernity that precedes colonialism, as both are aspects of capitalism, and “the modernity of non-European colonies is as indisputable as the colonial core of European modernity” (1).¹⁵ Following this line of literary criticism, efforts to describe more objectively the relationship between the West and China “in the proliferating conditions of difference that operated under the conditions of [China’s] semi-colonialism” invariably stress on the importance of translation (of Western ideas and literature into Chinese) in creating a translated and semi-colonial version (or versions) of Chinese modernity (Barlow 5).¹⁶

¹⁵ See also Arif Dirlik, “The Historiography of Colonial Modernity: Chinese History between Eurocentric Hegemony and Nationalism,” 97-115.

¹⁶ For the study of modernity in modern Chinese literature, see Lydia Liu He, *Translingual Practice:*

In theory and methodology, this thesis is also indebted to recent development in world-literature studies. The global production, circulation and reception of literary texts serve not merely as a mode of reading.¹⁷ More importantly, it provides a mode of thinking to identify multiple forms of unequal power relations within a global community. It seeks for a new ground for comparison that challenges traditional models of comparative literature in Western academic context.¹⁸ Goethe proposes his model of “Weltliteratur” with an example of a Chinese novel. The “common” theme and plot the Chinese novel shares with European literatures provides Goethe the basis for comparison and leads to his claim for universality. However, models of comparative literature with an emphasis on “universality” may ignore the opaqueness of translation: who made translation and circulation of a foreign text possible in the very first place? Is the translation faithful? Why or why not? How does unfaithful translation speak of the social mechanism in which translation takes place? These questions help us identify the historical contingency of the cross-cultural equivalence translation makes, thus disrupting the usually Eurocentric notion of “universality”. They also assist us to examine the gain and loss of cultural translation within specific historical and social background. In this thesis, I look at the intersection of British and Chinese modernities in which cultural agents both British (and American) and Chinese play an important role in the popular understanding of China in the early twentieth century.

Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity (1995); Zhao Yiheng, *The Uneasy Narrator: Chinese Fiction from the Traditional to the Modern* (1995); David Der-Wei Wang, *Fin-de-Siecle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848-1911* (1997); Leo Ou-Fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930-1945* (1999); and Shih Shu-Mei, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semi-Colonial China: 1917-1937* (2001).

¹⁷ See David Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 1-36.

¹⁸ See Warwick Research Collective, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-literature*, pp. 1-49.

Diaspora and ethnicity studies in the Anglo-American context provide another important theoretical and methodological dimension for this thesis's analysis of Chinese writers. A similar shift to the transnational paradigm indicates the interdisciplinary nature in diaspora, world-literature and global history studies.¹⁹ There has been scholarly endeavor to reconstruct diasporic Chinese identity by rediscovering Chinese writers in Britain in the early twentieth century. These writers form the "diverse counter-narratives to the modernist 'master narrative'" of modernization in Western historiography.²⁰ In the transnational approach to not locate diasporic identity in any "root" or essence but treat it as a "route" and a process of becoming, Paul Gilroy argues with regard to the black Atlantic context that tradition becomes a process rather than an end, and it facilitates diaspora identifications rather than diaspora identities.²¹ Diaspora study's attention to the process of racial and ethnic communication in immigrants' destination helps me to locate the importance of Chinese writers in Britain to the re-imagination of Anglo-Chinese relations in Britain.

Chapter Overview

This thesis consists of three chapters. The first chapter focuses on Bertrand Russell's travel to China and the production, circulation and reception process of his books, particularly *The Problem of China*, in both British and Chinese contexts. Reading through English and Chinese newspapers and journal articles which record the historical communication between Russell, the Chinese, and British expatriates

¹⁹ See Susan Friedman, "Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders," 260-293; and James Clifford, "Diasporas," 302-33.

²⁰ See Andrea Riemenschneider and Deborah L. Madsen's introduction to *Diasporic Histories: Cultural Archives of Chinese Transnationalism*, 1.

²¹ See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness*, 276.

with different interests in Chinese and Far Eastern issues, this chapter demonstrates socialism's intervention in British intellectuals' imagination of a new world order and of China and Britain's positions in the wake of the First World War. The shared sense of inequality this order creates lays the foundation for Russell and the Chinese to imagine shared affinities. However, Chinese and British responses to Russell and to concepts such as socialism and national character vary. This demonstrates that in a cultural contact zone, relations between the West and China is not simply action and response. Cultural translators and agents both British and Chinese negotiate for better clarification of concepts whose meaning is never definite. Chinese reception of Russell and his ideas registers a modern Chinese condition that is not only significant on its own but also transmits its significance to Britain via such travellers and agents as Russell. British responses to Russell on Chinese problems illustrate diverse forms of re-imagining the British Empire and its relations to China in the immediate post-war years when Bolshevik Russia and imperialist Japan complicated the situation in the Far East.

The second chapter is a continuation of the first chapter in its examination of British leftist intellectuals' cultural and political imagination of China. When the first chapter looks at the condition of the early 1920s, the second chapter turns its focus to the 1930s and examines how British and American journalists imagined solidarity with China in face of the impending Second World War. It centers on Auden and Isherwood's report of their journey in China during the Sino-Japanese War and situates the writers and their text within the body of British and American travel writing and war report about China and within the general discussion about China by the British left at home. In their representations, China is not a fixed and homogeneous entity but a nation severed by class and ideological divergence.

Neither is the Chinese problem a domestic issue. The domestic is complicated by the presence of international forces in China and is closely associated with European issues. Socialist points of view of various Western writers seek to establish transnational solidarity between China and Europe, but the process of making transnational solidarity is not easy and even. Cross-cultural and cross-class intellectual representations of Chinese coolies, unnamed bodies and Japanese captives usually reflect different stands within the leftist camp. In *Journey to a War* (1938), these subjects in wartime China become the source of Auden and Isherwood's representational crisis and present these two writers with a moral dilemma for cross-cultural understanding. This chapter situates this narrative dilemma in the body of war report to reveal difference in leftist positions and the corresponding diversity in establishing transnational solidarity with China in face of a global Nazi threat.

Chapters one and two examine how British "socialists" and "travellers", or "socialist travellers" to be more exact, reflect on their contact with China and portray transnational travel of people and ideas from Britain to China in the interwar years. In chapter three I examine the opposite route of travel from China to Britain. In this chapter I do a case analysis of the Chinese writer Shih-I Hsiung and his composition of drama and fiction in English on Chinese subjects. The Hsiung chapter connects to the Russell chapter in that they both illustrate the process of co-authorship, though in different contexts. In the case of Hsiung, this co-authorship takes on the form of book prefaces and publicity articles written by the British for Hsiung's works. I argue that this co-authorship is a process of cooperation as well as competition for the discursive power to represent China. The Hsiung chapter connects to chapter two through their common background of the Second World War. When British and

American journalists in China contributed to the change of stereotypical images of China and the Chinese by their up-to-date report of wartime China, Hsiung did similar job by publishing fictional works on China in Britain from mid-1930s to early 1940s. His self-representations of China and the Chinese, on the one hand, speak within the chinoiserie pattern and subvert the orientalist presumption of Western subject/Chinese object or Western modernity/Chinese tradition.²² On the other hand, they surpass the chinoiserie pattern of representing China and introduce the political history of modern China in its struggle between tradition and modernity and between competing political ideologies.²³

In conclusion, British “socialist travellers” to China and Hsiung’s travel from China to Britain illustrate the “already globalized artistic and literary ideas, concepts and languages, encountered prior to and following transnational migration” (Yeh, 8). In these contact spaces, people, texts and ideas travel both ways via cultural agents. They establish multiple ways of transnational connection under the uncertain circumstances of the interwar years when different possibilities were still open for a sense of cosmopolitanism to resist dominate ideologies and systematic inequality. In the Conclusion, I examine contemporary rethinking of the Anglo-Chinese relations of the early twentieth century in multiple literary and cultural productions. Rediscovery of the cosmopolitan spirit of this era demonstrates the importance of the early-twentieth-century cultural legacy to the present. The demand for transnational connection also implies that problems that troubled writers decades ago still pose a challenge today. Under such circumstances, efforts to establish transnational

²² I demonstrate this by a close reading of *Lady Precious Stream* (1934), an English play Hsiung adapts from traditional Chinese drama, in both book and theatre forms.

²³ I analyse these themes in Hsiung’s play *Professor from Peking* (1939) and novel *The Bridge of Heaven* (1943).

connection still matter.

Chapter One: Bertrand Russell and the Transnational Production, Circulation and Reception of *The Problem of China* (1922)

Socialism is what associates Russell with China and conditions their encounter. On the part of Russell, before coming to China, he had just finished his visit to Bolshevik Russia to examine the domestic condition of the first communist regime. Seeing Bolshevism as an ideological continuation of rather than reaction to the utilitarian pursuit of progress and efficiency, China became his new destination to seek for alternatives. Under the ideological tension of the 1920s, Soviet Russia bore an ambivalent relation to the British, even though it was definitely “a threat to the British Empire and a prime consideration in questions of imperial defence” (Neilson 4). As a severe critic of (British) imperialism, Russell saw Russia’s “threat” differently. His socialism was based on the merits of liberalism and democracy, which made him suspicious of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”.²⁴ Russell found in the Taoist (Laozi) concept of Inaction what was needed to express his socialist ideal, just as Wilde established the equivalence between Taoism (Zhuangzi) and his ideal of socialism, which constitutes “a radical critique of middle-class values and modern political institutions, and an advocacy for individual freedom” (Zhang 84). This reinterpretation of traditional Chinese culture was part and parcel of Anglo-American modernism’s association with Orientalism, thanks to the translation of classic Chinese literature and philosophy by such sinologist as Herbert Giles.²⁵

²⁴ See Pilip Ironside, *The Social and Political Thought of Bertrand Russell*, 146-61.

²⁵ For the study of modernism’s relation to orientalism, see, for example, Qian Zhaoming, *Orientalism*

When Wilde and modernist poets, such as Pound, imagined China with a critical distance as a pure invention, direct physical encounter with real China generated a different China discourse. To Beatrice and Sydney Webb, China in 1911 was dirty, undisciplined, inefficient, and homosexually hedonist. This impression made China a counter example in every sense of Britain and modernity and a less favourable nation compared to Japan, which was seen as a more successful imitator of the West.²⁶ This China discourse of the Webbs distinguishes their Fabian socialism from Russell's socialist ideal. Wilde and the Webbs turn to different Chinas (imagined and real, traditional and modern) for the expression of their respective social programme. Russell, in comparison, is attentive to both and in Russell's case, China is not merely the object for imagination but an interlocutor.

One important Chinese interlocutor of Russell is Liang Qichao, a leading intellectual in China in the early twentieth century. Liang was the representative of the "Lecture Society", which was the official organization that invited Russell to China. Liang's welcome speech to Russell largely frames what the Chinese expected of this British intellectual. Liang spoke in praise of Russell's pacifist stance against war, his advocacy of world unity against nationalism (imperialist national interests), and his independent thinking and action from official ideology.²⁷ This image of Russell was especially suitable to China when the theme of anti-imperialist nationalism was dominant in the 1920s.²⁸ Russell's socialist stance and his admiration for the Chinese spiritual civilization, however, attracted Chinese

and Modernism: *The Legacy of China in Pound and Williams*, 1995.

²⁶ See George Feaver, *Webbs in Asia: 1911-1912 Travel Diary*, 117-54.

²⁷ Yuan, *Collected Speeches and Lectures of Bertrand Russell in China: China's Roads to Freedom*, 29.

²⁸ See *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 12, Republican China 1912-1949, Part I*, 406-50.

conservatives, liberals and radicals alike to acquire intellectual capital and support for their respective project for modern China.²⁹ Therefore, what makes Russell's case different from either Wilde or the Webbs is dialogue, which guarantees inputs from both sides and necessarily complicates China as a discourse.

Previous studies of Russell's relation to China tend to conclude Russell's visit to China as a "failure" due to his limited influence on modern China's road to nationalism.³⁰ Nevertheless, Russell's encounter with China is not a one-way traffic of ideas from Britain (Russell) to China, nor can nationalism summarize the diversity of ideas in modern China, even though nationalism was a common sensibility. In the global circulation and reception of ideas about each other, preconceptions about the other lead to misreading. But misreading in dialogue is fascinating precisely because it reveals the multiple ways in which transnational connections get established. Russell in China provides us a case study to examine how and why misreadings took place in the historical context of the early 1920s. The discourse of national character and socialism are two major themes in question.

The Discourse of National Character: a Methodology

There is a frequently quoted and analyzed passage in *The Problem of China* (1922), a crystallization of the British philosopher's one year lecturing and travelling in China between 1920 and 1921. It reads as follows:

²⁹ See Jerome Ch'en, *China and the West: Society and Culture, 1815-1937*, 1.

³⁰ See Feng Chong Yi, *Luosu yu Zhongguo* [罗素与中国; *Bertrand Russell and China*] and Suzanne P. Odgen, "The Sage in the Inkpot: Bertrand Russell and China's Social Reconstruction in the 1920s," 529-600.

Shortly before I left China, an eminent Chinese writer pressed me to say what I considered the chief defects of the Chinese. With some reluctance, I mentioned three: avarice, cowardice, and callousness. Strange to say, my interlocutor, instead of getting angry, admitted the justice of my criticism, and proceeded to discuss possible remedies. This is a sample of the intellectual integrity which is one of China's greatest virtues. (209)

This particular plot in Russell's encounter with China has been the focus of different literary scholars. Russell's narrative resembles the typical Western ethnography, in which the Western observer describes the locals for a home readership with the collaboration and justification of a native informant. Attention to different ends of this dialogue and their corresponding contexts generates different scholarship that contributes to an understanding of the various aspects of this transcultural phenomenon. They invariably highlight the issue of subjectivity in Western-Chinese relations, but with very different interpretative frameworks. I'm comparing Eric Hayot, Lydia Liu He and Shumei Shih's respective critical perspectives on this same paragraph in order to define my own methodology in reading Russell.

For Hayot, his interests in Russell lie in contextualizing Russell's discourse within the Western intellectual history of knowing the other. He argues that the Orientalist description of the Chinese national character reveals the limits of Western perception of the other, which usually takes the form of occupying the other's subjectivity by the Western self, exemplified here by the relations between the Western observer and the native informant.³¹ By contrast, Shih Shumei is interested in Russell's Chinese interlocutor and his symbolic meaning within a Chinese context. Shih attributes the Chinese interlocutor's self-criticism to the "inferiority complex"

³¹ Eric Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin: Sympathy, Modernity, and Chinese Pain*, 172-206.

of modern Chinese intellectuals within a semi-colonial context. She argues that:

This inferiority complex resulted from the negation of what is Chinese, and a desire to be accepted as equals with the powerful West and Japan. The negative self-perception mimicking that of the imperialists also carried with it a class dimension, however.... If the intellectuals felt inferior to the West and Japan then, this inferiority translated into superiority over the masses.

(24)

Shih's Fanon-like psychiatric interpretation of the semi-colonial mentality in modern China, while true to a certain degree, sets a too rigid and antagonistic division between the West and China or between the intellectuals and the masses. The overemphasis on China's semi-colonial nature represents an economic determinism that denies Chinese subjectivity or possibility for negotiation. It tends to reduce both the West and China as homogeneous and contrasting entities without internal discursive diversity. This also renders the Chinese intellectuals as mere passive imitators and receivers of Western discourse (which does not have to be imperialist), undermining the power of the Chinese in its discursive relationship with the West and Japan. Ironically, Shih cites Russell's Chinese interlocutor to demonstrate modern Chinese intellectuals' psychological crisis, ignoring the fact that the subjectivity of Russell's Chinese interlocutor has already been consumed by Russell's Western perception of the anonymous Chinese other.

How, then, do we imagine the space of China's semi-coloniality in a more constructive manner and a more intellectually challenging way? Lydia Liu seeks for Chinese subjectivity not in Russell's textual representation of the Chinese, but in China's reception of Russell's discourse (and the Western discourse at large) of Chinese national character. Liu argues that by translating Russell's description of

Chinese characteristics into Chinese and by appropriating it for the different purposes of China's social reconstruction, Chinese intellectuals acquire the status of coauthor with Russell in producing discourses of China. This translingual practice restores Chinese subjectivity and proves the Chinese context to be an equally significant space as the Western context where meanings take place.³² Liu's emphasis on the reception end of the Western theory in China helps us perceive semi-colonial China as a contact zone, as Mary Louise Pratt defines the notion in a different context.³³ China's reception of Russell illustrates the phenomenon of transculturation in the contact zone, where "members of subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant or metropolitan culture" (Pratt 36). The perception of transculturation avoids the overtly reductive concepts of an absolute Western domination and Chinese subordination without ignoring the uneven power relations between the West/Britain and China.

Liu's notion of translingual practice highlights the reception of a discourse in a cross-cultural context as a process of coauthorship. Similarly, we can also examine Russell's reception at home as another case of coauthorship. Hayot's method to fictionalize the encounter of Russell with China situates Russell's "Chinese eyes" within the structure of the Western perception of Chinese indifference. It problematizes the same pair of eyes as the omnipotent and self-assured Western narrator in *The Problem of China*, who, although in a more nuanced way tries to rationalize the difference of Chinese callousness, still attributes the inexplicable residue of it to the fundamental difference between the self and the other.

³² Lydia Liu, *Translingual Practice*, 45-7.

³³ The contact zone refers to "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today". See Pratt, "Arts of the Contact Zone," 34.

Fictionalizing Russell enables us to think of national character not so much as an innate feature of the Chinese than as a discursive formation by an author from a particular perspective, not so much as a natural standard for Western superiority and Chinese inferiority than as the limitation of the Western structure of perception of the other.³⁴ In other words, at the production end of the discourse, Hayot demystifies the discourse of national character, as Said deconstructs Orientalism.

Nevertheless, Hayot's emphasis on the inevitable causal relations between the discourse of national character and the Western structure of perceiving the other tends to ignore the reception end of Russell in the British context.³⁵ Seeing Russell's discourse of Chinese national character as merely an inevitable outcome of Western structure of perceiving the other fails to explain how China functioned differently compared to other geographical locations (India, for example) for the British in the early 1920s. This method equally ignores Britain's discursive diversity in its perceptions of the Anglo-Chinese relations. If we agree with Liu's acknowledgment that Chinese translation and appropriation of the discourse of national character are important translingual practices which create new meanings in a Chinese context, we should equally examine the reception of Russell and the discourse of national character in Britain. Like Hayot, Liu similarly situates Russell's discourse of national character within Western tradition of knowledge production. But Liu more specifically traces Russell's narrative of Chinese characteristics to Western missionaries' portrayal of the essential Chinese virtue. Like Hayot, she argues that Russell was simultaneously "impervious to the historical contingency of his own discourse" and "deeply entrenched in the nineteenth-century European theory of

³⁴ Hayot, *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 194-5.

³⁵ Even though Hayot is aware of Lydia Liu's examination of Russell's reception in China. See Hayot, 195-6.

national character” (46). Co-authorship between Russell and his Chinese interlocutor in producing the discourse of national character “has the effect of consolidating the author’s own knowledge about the other even as the subjectivity of the anonymous other is consumed in the process of appropriation” (46). Therefore, her examination of Russell’s reception is purely confined to the Chinese context.

When translingual practice problematizes Western discursive power over the non-Western, would the reception and response within the same linguistic domain intervene in the presumption of a monolithic Western discourse, irrespective of the function of location and political affiliation in the production of different discourses of China? If the nineteenth-century Anglo-American missionary discourse of national character corresponds to multiple Chinese reinterpretations in the early twentieth century, we should equally acknowledge the diversity of the early-twentieth-century British receptions of this nineteenth-century discourse. Perceiving the reception end as a constitutive force in producing new discourses helps us to distinguish the early twentieth century from previous eras. If the nineteenth-century missionary discourse of national character registers British imperialism at its prime, which encountered Manchu China in its final stage of struggle, early-twentieth-century British receptions of this discourse are situated in a changed Anglo-Chinese relations, with Britain experiencing the aftermath of the First World War in 1918 and the Russian Revolution in 1917 on the one hand, and with China becoming a republic and seeking to renew its international relations with Western powers on the other.

Moreover, I would like to argue that to read Russell’s encounter with China as fiction, as Hayot does, brings a lot more benefits than a postcolonial deconstruction of Orientalism. Important as it is, the discussion of national character is only part of

the plot of this fiction.³⁶ Russell's "Chinese eyes" focus on more than one subjects. They also include the role of the intellectuals, coolies, and socialism among others. Therefore, the discourse of national character should always be discussed in conjunction with issues of imperialism, nationalism, Bolshevism, and socialism, which all distinctly register the context of the 1920s. Accordingly, the history of the Western perception of the other, often with the self's occupation of the other's subjectivity, does not represent sole authorship of this fiction. To put it in another way, overemphasis on plot as an inevitable consequence of the the Western perception of the other tends to ignore the fact that West-East encounters take place at multiple discursive levels and that narratives about such encounters are not only plural but also in relation to each other. Russell's reception in Britain formulates a co-authorship which responds to existing Western discourses of China in the early-twentieth-century environment.

Hayot's discussion of Russell and the discourse of national character aims to clarify the relationship between Orientalism and Western/British modernism. He concludes that China in its orientalist construction is a constitutive element in the formation of British modernism. This is Hayot's response to Patricia Laurence, who, in her examination of the historical and personal relations between the Bloomsbury group and the Crescent Moon group in China, concludes that British modernism is unthinkable without China. Hayot argues that Laurence's conclusion sets the bar for relevance too high.³⁷ For me, the question I set for myself is not how important China is to the formation of British modernism, understanding that Bloomsbury modernism provided one of the many perspectives that contributed to the rethinking

³⁶ Hayot, Shih, and Liu's discussion of Russell invariably focuses on the discussion of national character.

³⁷ Hayot, 206.

of the Anglo-Chinese relations in the early twentieth century. Instead, I am looking at an enlarged body of historical subjects and the diversity of their imaginings of the Anglo-Chinese relations. One reason I include Bertrand Russell as part of my thesis is because of his high visibility in both British and Chinese contexts. This visibility ensures a decent amount of literature created in direct response to his visit to China and to his book *The Problem of China*, in both languages and in both contexts. The many topics he discusses in his book also connect the text to a larger body of literature on China around the same period of time. In a word, Russell here provides for me an effective example to illustrate the production, circulation and reception of texts, ideas and theories on a global basis.

Correspondingly, the primary sources I look at include the reception of Russell by newspapers in Britain, English newspapers in China, and the Chinese reception of Russell. I cross-examine these materials for their discussion of socialism, national character, and the Anglo-Chinese relations to demonstrate how important location and language are to the production, circulation and reception of received notions of China and the Chinese. Ross Forman has well demonstrated the significance of location to the Anglophone literary production of China in the Victorian era. I borrow this notion of a heterogeneous and interconnected nature of knowledge production within the British Empire to examine the condition of the early twentieth century. The reception of Russell by newspapers in Britain and by English newspapers in China reveals the multiple subjects who imagined the Anglo-Chinese relations according to their different interests relating to China: imperialists, ambassadors to China, missionaries, and sojourners like Russell. Meanwhile, my proficiency in Mandarin and the existence of a body of Chinese sources about Russell's reception in China facilitate me to incorporate Chinese perspectives into

the global reimagining of Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1920s, thus demonstrating the importance of translingual practice to transcultural negotiations in the contact zone.³⁸

The Discourse of National Character in Context

The nineteenth-century missionary discourse of the Chinese national character as avarice, cowardice, and callousness finds its manifestation in Arthur Smith, an American missionary working in rural areas in northern China, whose book *Chinese Characteristics* (1889) partly determines the receptive context of Russell's discourse in China. In his book, Smith enumerates 26 Chinese characteristics. Although they are a mixture of both good and bad ones, the bad ones are defined as being bad due to their difference from the Anglo-Americans and ultimately functions to lead Smith to the proposal for a Christian domination of China and the Chinese. This explanation of the formation of Chinese characteristics, as Liu sums up, "subsumes human differences under the totalizing category of national identity and has proved tremendously useful in legitimizing Western imperialist expansion and domination of the world" (48).

The flaw in the logic of the theory of national character lies just in the contingency of its historical validity, as Liu implies. The theory conjured up by nineteenth-century missionaries is based on a comparison between an industrialized West and a still predominantly agricultural China. Differences between the industrial and the rural are thus reframed as those between the modern and the traditional along a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. It is with the same linear concept of history

³⁸ See Forman, *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined*.

that Marx and Engels reduce China to a status of “Asiatic barbarity” or “semi-civilization” (175), even though their argument about China leads to a totally different conclusion regarding Western civilization.

Russell’s comment on the defects of the Chinese has its own context. In general, Russell explains that “much of what strikes the foreigner is due merely to the fact that they have preserved an ancient civilization which is not industrial” (*Problem of China* 212). In particular, when he thinks over Chinese avarice, Russell states again that “it is, therefore, quite likely that changed industrial conditions will make the Chinese as honest as we are” (211). Therefore, industrialism, which is taken by Russell as the most recent source of Western Europe and American mental life, is considered a key factor in explaining China’s difference from the West. And as a consequence, as Eric Hayot very well summarizes, Russell places a set of cultural differences “within a framework that allows them to be understood as contingent rather than genetic, as functions of particular circumstances rather than expressions of some deep-set Chinese national character” (193).

The Marxian view of China takes the mode of production as the decisive factor in connecting Western capitalism to Chinese savagery: it is the difference in productivity that puts China under the exploitation of Western capitalism, but capitalist exploitation paves the way for a world revolution that unites different parts of the world (including China) to rebel against capitalism’s global dominance. Similar to the Marxian school of criticism, Russell takes industrialism as the major factor that distinguishes Western civilization from Chinese culture. He also holds a similar critical attitude towards capitalism and the global injustice it creates. Nevertheless, there are also crucial differences between Russell and orthodox Marxism regarding China’s place in comparison to the West and modes of resistance.

Russell's China discourse can well demonstrate these differences.

Russell consciously tones down economic determinism in explaining national character. Thinking of reasons that influence national character, Russell claims that "climate and economic circumstances account for part, but not the whole. Probably a great deal depends upon the character of dominant individuals who happen to emerge at a formative period, such as Moses, Mahomet, and Confucius" (*Problem of China* 187). The consideration of the cultural elements tones down the hierarchical concept of perceiving China as the inferior other.

Here Russell also shows his belief in the importance of leadership in forming the national character and in waving national movement, which is actually a reiteration of what he expressed in *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920) in dealing with the deciding forces in politics: "Among men, as among other gregarious animals, the united action, in any given circumstances, is determined partly by the common passions of the herd, partly by imitation of leaders. The art of politics consists in causing the latter to prevail over the former" (129). Russell prioritizes the leader over the herd. It is in the same spirit that he emphasizes on "Young China" as the leading force towards a nation that will combine good characters of both the West and China. In Russell's context, Young China refers to "those who have been educated either abroad or in modern colleges at home ... They remain Chinese, critical of European civilization even when they have assimilated it. They retain a certain crystal candour and a touching belief in the efficacy of moral forces" (*Problem of China* 77-8). Accordingly, the aim Russell thinks Young China should set for themselves is "the preservation of the urbanity and courtesy, the candour and the pacific temper, which are characteristic of the Chinese nation, together with a knowledge of Western science and an application of it to the practical problems of

China” (250).

In his farewell speech to his Chinese audience, Russell tells them to develop “ten thousand resolute men” as the leaders for China in future, who “have to be honest, energetic and intelligent, incapable of corruption, unwearying in work, willing to assimilate whatever is good in the West, and yet not the slaves of mechanism like most Europeans and Americans”.³⁹ The proposal for either Young China or the ten thousand resolute men testifies to Russell’s belief in the important role of good leaders. The qualities with which he endows them indicate a strong moral appeal. What is desirable is the urbanity and peace in the Chinese characteristics represented by Lao-Tze; what is to be altered in the Chinese characteristics is the Confucian family ethics and filial piety, which according to Russell, easily cause corruption and hinder the development of public spirit that is best needed in building up a modern society; the advantage of the West over China is only its scientific and technological aspects. But every proposal for the Chinese is equally a proposal for the West. Russell’s suggestion for the Chinese to preserve Taoist teaching is equally a criticism of the mechanistic outlook in both imperialism and Bolshevism, which “is the habit of regarding mankind as raw material” (*Problem of China* 82). This is similar to Russell’s criticism of the Marxian materialistic conception of history, by which Russell means that “all the mass-phenomena of history are determined by economic motives” (*Practice and Theory* 119). It is due to this divergence in historical conception and in social outlook that Russell differs from Marxism in regarding China as savage due to an inferiority to the Western bourgeois mode of production. In reversing Marxist and missionary discourses,

³⁹ Russell, “China’s Road to Freedom,” quoted from Quoted from Richard A. Rempel, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Uncertain Paths to Freedom, 1919-1922*, 264.

Russell conjures up an alternative one. He not only recognizes the contingency of the historical validity of the missionary theory of national character, but also challenges Marxian doctrine's view that the economic aspect is the sole factor to measure the value of a civilization. Alternatively, the Western mode of production, with the fruits of its modern civilization, under the influence of a mechanistic outlook, acquires that immorality so often bestowed upon the Chinese. This is an exact reversal of the discourse of the Asian invasion novels at the turn of the century that worries about the Chinese who "adopt the fruits of 'civilization'—weapons, for example—but fail to place them in a moral framework that will assure their just use" (Forman 140).

Russell further argues that:

I believe that, if the Chinese are left free to assimilate what they want of our civilization, and to reject what strikes them as bad, they will be able to achieve an organic growth from their own tradition, and to produce a very splendid result, combining our merits with theirs. (13)

Critiquing the superiority mindset held by Westerners in their intercourse with China, Russell described the relationship between China and the West not so much as contesting civilizational blocks than as having interchangeable qualities and making mutual influences. This hypothetical freedom China enjoys in Russell's rhetoric reveals precisely the lack of freedom, political and economic, in China's relations to Western and Japanese powers in 1920. Identifying the Chinese problems as predominantly cultural questions and constructing China as an artist nation which creates "virtues chiefly useful to others and vices chiefly harmful to oneself" (10), Russell reset the criteria for judging international relations and reminded his readers of the evil created by industrialism on a global basis. To Russell as well as to Dickinson, traditional Chinese culture became "an antidote to the Western 'disease'"

(Ironside 152), even though Russell and Dickinson interpreted this Chinese tradition very differently: Taoism for Russell and Confucianism for Dickinson. Whichever Chinese tradition they chose to identify, the emphasis on the “organic growth from tradition” incorporates China into their overall modernist project of rethinking capitalist development.

National Character, Class and the Concept of History

The discourse of national character is a class rhetoric as much as it is a racial matter. Discussions of national character are not merely carried out in a general sense. They often start from the description of individuals. When Russell’s eyes turn to the Chinese coolies, their talk and laugh at the intervals of hard labour become symbols of “instinctive happiness”, which serves as the universal standard of the end of life: “I mean also the almost unconscious effort after beauty which one finds among Russian peasants and Chinese coolies, the sort of impulse that creates folk-songs....” (*Problem of China* 12). Incorporating the masses into the discourse of the artistic disrupts the utilitarian outlook that regards the masses as means of production. Russell’s 1920 visit to Bolshevik Russia makes him wonder at the profundity of “the disease in our Western mentality, which the Bolsheviks are attempting to force upon an essentially Asiatic population” (18). The unconscious pursuit after beauty by the Chinese coolies, therefore, constitutes Russell’s conscious effort to seek for cultural alternatives, to capitalism as well as to Russian Bolshevism.

In his book review “Mr Bertrand Russell on the Far East”, which was published in the *Times Literary Supplement* on 21 September 1922, Sir. Valentine Chirol challenges Russell’s “peculiar angle of vision” in comparing China to the

West. Disapproving Russell's description of the happiness of Chinese coolies, Chirol claims that for the "average Chinese laborer and the lower classes of townsmen":

If they were generally happy, opium smoking, of which our author says not a word, would not have laid such widespread hold of them. For its chief attraction is that that induces for a time complete forgetfulness of life, and why seek to forget life if it is happy? (592)

Chirol's rhetoric of the Chinese lower classes repeats the logic of the missionary theory of national character. Establishing a hypothetical equivalence between unhappiness and opium smoking and seeing opium smoking as an indicator of private morality, Chirol understands the issue of unhappiness as a personal matter of the Chinese lower classes, forgetting to ask the political and economic motives behind the opium trade. Underlying this critique of the Chinese is a justification for Britain's commercial interests in China. Different rhetorics of the Chinese coolies thus reveal different angles of vision regarding British imperialism.

Chirol's stand gets confirmed by another review in response to Russell's book. In *The Observer* on 8 October 8 1922, John Jordan similarly identifies Russell's "bitter hostility to all things Western" (5). But unlike Chirol, Jordan, in his patronizing tone, expresses a positive belief in Britain's active engagement in Chinese issues. In terms of trade, he thinks merchants of both countries share an unparalleled "cordiality and mutual confidence", and that "the Associated British Chambers of Commerce in China annually outline their policy and aspirations invariably meet with the hearty concurrence of all classes of Chinese" (5). With regard to Christianity, he preaches that the missionary "is respected, as never before, throughout the length and breadth of the land [China]" (5). He has "too much faith in

the common-sense and inherent stability of the Chinese ... the mass of the Chinese population, who live rooted to the soil in the enjoyment of an excellent system of land tenure” (5). In his narrative, China remains largely a rural and agricultural country, and the Chinese are satisfied with the current state and with their intercourse with British people. The triumphant celebration of British commerce subsumes China to Britain’s economic interests.

Chirol refers thus to the lower classes of China and attributes their addiction to opium to their own unhappiness and impotence, which is a similar rhetoric to the missionary theory of national character. Moreover, he agrees with Prince Ito⁴⁰ and Gordon⁴¹ to believe that:

The worst service which the West had rendered to the Chinese was to have helped in putting down the great Taiping rebellion... Because that rebellion was one of the traditional processes of Chinese national purification, which, had it not been forcibly arrested, would have once more given China at least another lease of life under a new and less effete dynasty than that of the Manchus. (592)

From Chirol’s perspective, the Taiping rebellion should be considered as a continuation of China’s traditional dynastic circle. Neither is China the “blameless victims of Western ... exploitation,” nor should the West interfere in the Chinese traditional way of historical development. China should take responsibility of its own problems and suffering. This perspective is a justification for the Western presence in China, which denies China its possibility of modernization. In the same

⁴⁰ Prince Itō Hirobumi, (1841-1909), Japanese statesman, four-time prime minister of Japan.

⁴¹ Charles George Gordon, (1833-1885), British army officer and administrator. In the early 1860s, he helped the Qing Dynasty of China in putting down the Taiping Rebellion.

civilization-savagery rhetoric, Marx has dealt with the Taiping rebellion from an exact opposite perspective in “Revolution in China and In Europe,” published in June 1853 in the *New York Daily Tribune*:

Whatever be the social causes, and whatever religious, dynastic, or national shape they may assume, that have brought about the chronic rebellions subsisting in China for about ten years past, and now gathered together in one formidable revolution, the occasion of this outbreak has unquestionably been afforded by the English cannon forcing upon China that soporific drug called opium. Before the British arms the authority of the Manchu dynasty fell to pieces; the superstitious faith in the eternity of the Celestial Empire broke down; the barbarous and hermetic isolation from the civilized world was infringed; and an opening was made for that intercourse which has since proceeded so rapidly under the golden attractions of California and Australia. At the same time the silver coin of the Empire, its life-blood, began to be drained away to the British East Indies. (62-3)

The opium smoking of the Chinese lower class, in Marx’s context, does not refer so much to the defects of Chinese characteristics as to the exploitation of the Chinese market by Western capitalists. Similarly, the Taiping rebellion refers not so much to a rebellion in a Chinese traditional context as to a result of the Eastern primitive and Western bourgeoisie in antagonism in the same pattern as the proletarian and bourgeois confrontation within the European context. In spite of this difference in perspective, they still share the clichéd discourse of a static, traditional or primitive image of China.

It is not difficult to notice in both reviews a devotion to British imperialism, which perpetuates China to a clichéd image of stagnation and frames China in

opposition to Western modernity. Moreover, this image is often represented by either the lower class or the rural areas in China. It is equally true with Smith, who, as a missionary in rural China, is mainly taking the countryside Chinese as his object of observation, but it turns out that this portion of the Chinese population, although making up the majority of the whole population in a largely non-urbanized and non-industrialized China, is appropriated as the image of China proper.

In a book review entitled “The Peace of Cathay” published in the *Times* on 23 October 1922, the anonymous author interestingly summarizes the general impressions of China left on the general public by saying that:

There are, indeed, three current views of China, all of them legendary, but all firmly fixed in different minds. There is, first, the view held to some extent by Mr. Russell, of this tranquil unchanging world which knows by instinct secrets of life that we cannot learn by experience; there is, next, the view, based on stories of baby towers and pictures of Chinese tortures, that they are a people at once sinister and grotesque; and lastly, there is the willow-pattern Chinoiserie view that China is a fairy-story land peopled by puppets both charming and a little ridiculous. But behind all those views is the sense that far away in the East is a society utterly different from our own, the only serious rival of our own in the process of history, which has the secret of perpetuity. (11)

The fact that the views of China that are firmly fixed within the Western minds should all be legendary reveals the mechanism of the Orientalist discourse which has nothing to do with the realities of China. The author subsumes Russell’s presentation of China under the category of tranquility and secret. Just like Chirol and Jordan’s claim of agreeing largely with Russell’s view of Chinese character, while being a

misconception or at least a partial representation, it takes Russell's words out of their original context and appropriates them into the discourse of their own. The overall reception of Russell's view of China, therefore, indicates their divergence from Russell. More importantly, they help identify Russell's perspective to be a combination of pro-Chinese and socialism.

Preconceptions and Misinterpretations: Discussions of Socialism

On two occasions during his stay in China, Russell's speeches aroused widespread discussions among Chinese intellectuals. The first occasion was one and a half months after Russell's arrival, centered around his remarks on socialism. The discussion was primarily carried on in the December issue of the *Xin Qing Nian* (*New Youth*) magazine in 1920, the leading cultural magazine in China; the other focused on Russell's proposal to China's social reconstruction in his farewell speech at the end of his ten-month stay in China. These occasions opened a space for direct encounter between Russell's ideals and Chinese intellectuals' interpretation of Russell. His stay in China witnesses a process in which he kept adjusting his opinion of what was the possible way for China's social reconstruction based on his observation and accumulated knowledge of China's problems. Nevertheless, this adjustment of opinion did not constitute the change in his political ideals, as some of the Chinese suggested. On the contrary, his political and social proposals to China, from beginning till end, were interestingly in accordance with his existing political ideals before he visited China, as had been expressed in his books on social issues. Even when conflicts occur—for example, Russell's political ideal for Britain and European nations is Guild socialism, but it turns into State socialism for China—the

logic and morality remain the same. Many of the misunderstandings of and disappointment at Russell from the Chinese are due to the failure of the latter to catch Russell's inner logic in concerning Chinese issues. The question of why this happened is one concern of this chapter. Meanwhile, miscommunications were part of Russell's experience in China, and this chapter also aims to solve how they, as part of the condition of China, may have influenced Russell's ideas of resolving China's problems.

Russell's Chinese audience mainly focused on Russell's comments on socialism, Russian Bolshevism and China's possibility to develop a socialist society. They received Russell in their different ways to reconstruct Chinese modernity. In the issue of the *Xin Qing Nian* published on 1 December, 1920, Zhang Dong Sun argues against the necessity for China to take any form of state or anarchist socialism. He supports his argument by quoting Russell's suggestion in his earlier speeches that China should develop its education and industry, and that socialism is not as urgent an issue in comparison. Zhang agrees with Russell in his belief in Guild socialism as the ideal form of a state. This is why he preaches in a separate article that China needs regional autonomy and does not want a powerful and proletariat government, the route that Soviet Russia had taken.⁴²

However, in another article, a different author quotes Russell to support exactly the opposite opinion. A Mr Zi Li provides a counter-argument by saying that Russell does advise China to develop industry, but what Russell emphasizes is that China must not make the same mistakes that Western nations had made in their industrial development. Therefore, according to Zi Li, Russell's suggestion for

⁴² "Discussions of Socialism." *Xin Qing Nian* [*New Youth*] 1 Dec. 1920: 1, 7-8, 17.

China's development is to avoid the evils of Western capitalist industrialism by choosing the socialist way of developing industry. Then he preaches optimistically, "Our socialists can now well imagine how industrialism will be fully developed under a socialist system, and we deeply believe that it is only under socialism that industrial development will truly enable people to live a real life." ("Discussions" 4-7)

An examination of Russell's original words in his speeches suffice to explain the discrepancy between the two Chinese critics. In his lecture "principles of social reconstruction," originally translated into English and published in *Chen Bao* (*Morning Post*) on 17 October 1920, Russell assures his Chinese audience that industrialism in China will be well developed someday, but he is reluctant to see China making the same mistakes as western nations have made in the process of their industrial development. Therefore, he proposes that the best way for China to enhance its industrial power is Guild socialism, with trade unions seeking their own way. But he admits that there are other possibilities as well (Yuan 3-4).⁴³

The vagueness of Russell's suggestion for China indicates his prudence in applying Western theories to the Chinese context. At this early stage during his stay in China, Russell claims several times that as a foreigner who is ignorant of China's problems and needs, he just tries to introduce the condition of Europe and let the Chinese themselves determine if this is helpful in thinking about their own issues. Nevertheless, neither Zhang nor Zi Li take real notice of the European context of Russell's words. Instead, both quickly appropriate part of Russell's words to support their own political ideals for China. Zi Li's description of the socialist outlook for

⁴³ Yuan, Gang, et al., eds, *Collected Speeches and Lectures of Bertrand Russell in China*, 3-4.

China reveals its utopian nature without providing feasible methods for the necessary transition from the current social problems to that imagined utopia.

These misinterpretations of Russell indicate the common preconceptions different Chinese intellectuals held in their reception of their British counterpart. This is further revealed in an article published in *Shanghai Life* on 14 December 1920. The editor questions Russell's motivation, probably targeting Russell's four speeches on Russian Bolshevism in November, "Why did an adept of communism and a friend of the Russian people want to come to China on purpose to explain that the organization of communism has no success in Russia and that people are suffering from it?"⁴⁴

Sympathizing with the Bolshevik Russia and taking Russia as the living incarnation of the Communist ideal, the editor's query of Russell's stance reveals his ready ideological division between pro- and anti- Communist stances, even though Russell's works on social and political ideas had been partly translated into Chinese and relatively readily available for the reference of the Chinese.⁴⁵ On a different note, however, it is also through these translations that Chinese intellectuals and students created an image of Russell who is "adept of communism and a friend of the Russian people". The Chinese expectation of Bolshevik Russia and China's equal respect for

⁴⁴ Russell, "To the Editor of 'Shanghai Life'," 21 Dec. 1920. Quoted from Richard A. Rempel, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Uncertain Paths to Freedom, 1919-1922*, 214-5.

⁴⁵ Available materials indicate the condition of the introduction and translation of Russell's political and social ideas in China during 1919 and 1920 before he travelled there:

Zhang Dong Sun, "Russell's 'Political Ideas'." *Jie Fang Yu Gai Zao* 1 Sep 1919.

Shen Yan Bing, "Russell's 'Roads to Freedom'." *Jie Fang Yu Gai Zao* 1 Dec 1919.

Gao Yi Han, "Russell's Social Philosophy." *Xin Qing Nian* 7. 5 (1920).

Yu Jia Ju, trans, "Social Reconstruction." *Chen Bao* [*Morning Post*] 5 Jan to 13 Aug 1920.

Dewey, "Three Philosophers of Our Age." *Min Guo Ri Bao* [*Republican Daily*] 22-27 Mar 1920.

Russell made it difficult for the Chinese to accept Russell's criticism of Russian Bolshevism. The editor's dissatisfaction with Russell's criticism of Russia, again like Zhang and Zi Li, is a misinterpretation. In his letter to this editor on December 21st, Russell indicates that the editor has failed to get access to his original words in his four speeches on "Bolshevik and the World Politics", given earlier in November, but merely allows himself "to be misled by the capitalist press, which does not report fairly what is said about Russia".⁴⁶ Chinese translations of these four speeches were immediately published in *Min Guo Ri Bao (Republican Daily)* on 3, 7, 8, 9 Nov. 1920 for the general readership. Even though there was no record of these speeches in English as Russell has delivered them, a comparison of their Chinese translations to Russell's examination of Bolshevism in his book *The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism* (1920) indicates that the translations are largely loyal to Russell's expressions. Misunderstanding of Russell derives not so much from the unfaithful translation of Russell's words as from understanding Russell through preconceptions and secondhand interpretations without referring to Russell's expressions either in their English original or Chinese translations.

Russell did mention the failure of Russian industry and the suffering of its people, but he has "traced Russian difficulties to capitalist hostility".⁴⁷ Even when primary materials existed, the Chinese either failed to access them, or to understand them in their original context. Apart from these misinterpretations that are derived from the transnational circulation of ideas, a more fundamental divergence exists between Russell's outlook of China and the Chinese communists, represented by Chen Du-Xiu. This divergence is reflected by the purpose of Russell's China visit,

⁴⁶ Russell, "To the Editor of 'Shanghai Life'," 21 Dec. 1920, 214.

⁴⁷ Russell, "To the Editor of 'Shanghai Life'," 21 Dec. 1920, 214.

and by a comparison of their respective political ideals (which I will discuss in further detail later).

Neither does Russell visit China to criticize Bolshevik Russia on purpose, as the editor of *Shanghai Life* suggests, nor is it for the reasons Ogden gives in her examination of Russell's motivation to visit China: "Motivated partly by a desire to exert influence over a vast and fluid nation and partly by curiosity, Russell came to China with a view to discovering what China's problems were; but he also came with many preconceptions of what the best solutions would be" (542). According to Russell's own words, however:

I was invited to lecture on philosophy in the University of Peking, and I came prepared with purely academic lectures on psychology and the principles of physics. But when I landed, to my surprise, those who had invited me insisted on my lecturing on social questions, especially Russia.⁴⁸

As is mentioned earlier, Chinese preconceptions of Russell can be well illustrated by Liang Qi-Chao's welcome speech to Russell, which interprets Russell as an anti-imperialist fighter. This, together with many other occasions in China, made Russell come up with such an impression of the Chinese: "It is impossible not to be surprised by the general belief that a sage must be able to give moral advice by which a nation's difficulties can be solved."⁴⁹ To a certain extent, Russell was regarded as a sage and was expected by the Chinese to give moral advice. Chinese attention to Russell's personal qualities and his symbolism as the liberal values overwhelmed a close examination of his political and social theories. This Chinese reception of

⁴⁸ Russell, "To the Editor of 'Shanghai Life'," 21 Dec. 1920, 214.

⁴⁹ Russell, "First Impressions of China," Quoted from Richard A. Rempel, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Uncertain Paths to Freedom, 1919-1922*, 249-50.

Russell indicates Chinese intellectuals' sense of urgency in search of Chinese modernity. Their pursuit of modernity tends to construct a universalism that often confirms the West as the origin.

Russell equally holds preconceptions about China. However, they are less about modern China's social reconstruction than about traditional Chinese culture in contrast to the Western modern civilization. In *The Problem of China*, Russell claims that he "sets out for China to seek a new hope" at the disillusionment with "Occidental hopefulness" (20) as a result of his visit to Bolshevik Russia. Both the Western private capitalism and Russian Bolshevism contain a mechanistic outlook that tends to ignore individuality. What Russell would like to see is "a new blend of Western skill with the traditional Chinese virtues" (242). Or as he states in an earlier article "An Englishman's China" (1919): "modern China is throwing over tradition, and in so doing is doubtless pursuing the path of happiness for the people. But it is at the same time, and unavoidably, throwing over a heritage of exquisite beauty".⁵⁰ The Chinese tradition that hinders the progress of modern China, as Russell refers to, is the Confucian system of morality which is centered on family piety, which, according to Russell, prevents modern China from building public spirit. Traditional Chinese virtues are mainly represented, according to Russell, by the Taoist teaching of "production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination" which is quoted by Russell on the title page of *Roads to Freedom* (1918). Russell's praise for this doctrine is due to its harmony with his own belief in the creative impulses instead of the possessive impulses. Russell seeks in the Chinese virtues a complement to the Western and Bolshevik mechanistic outlook;

⁵⁰ Russell, "An Englishman's China," *The Athenaeum*, 4. 658 (8 Aug. 1919): 715-6. Quoted from Richard A. Rempel, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Uncertain Paths to Freedom, 1919-1922*, 70-3.

his proposals for China equally echoes this consideration. It is this moral consideration that essentially differentiates him from the Chinese communists in their ideals for China's social reconstruction.

Chen Duxiu and Russell: Practice and Theory of Communism

Similar misinterpretations exist in Russell's exchanges with the Chinese Communists. Chen Duxiu, one of the earliest Communists in China, a founding member of the Chinese Communist Party, and also the editor of the *Xin Qing Nian* (*New Youth*) magazine, published a letter to Russell in the December issue of the magazine, in which he queries Russell regarding his speech about socialism. This letter registers the encounter between Russell and the Chinese Communists. It indicates that the Chinese Communists' misunderstanding of Russell's outlook for China implies a more fundamental difference between them in their assessment of the Western and Chinese civilizations. In this letter, Chen warns Russell in a quite serious tone:

Recently some capitalist press preached that you have proposed for China to develop its education and industrialism instead of socialism. It would be good if you could help clarify whether this is truly what you have said, otherwise it can be misleading to the Chinese and may disappoint progressive Chinese. ("Discussions" 8)

The reports of the "capitalist press" may probably refer to the two articles which have been published earlier but reprinted in the December issue of *Xin Qing Nian* for discussion. One is Zhang Dongsun's "Another Lesson" mentioned earlier, which was originally published in *Shishi Xinbao* on 6 Nov 1920; the other is Yang's "A

Dialogue with Mr. Russell.”⁵¹ Zhang quotes Russell to support his idea of self-government, with each province choosing the method of development most suitable to their own condition. Yang agrees with Russell about the Chinese government’s incapability to effectively develop industry and about entrusting the proletariat with this task of industrialization. He concludes that it is inevitable to rely on the Chinese capitalists to develop industry for the moment, and that China must experience a period of capitalism before its transition to socialism, even though the capitalist system has drawbacks.⁵²

Chen’s letter implies several important messages: that to China’s socialists, socialism is synonymous with progress; that they take great care of the ideological battle against “capitalist” propaganda, which are no more than alternatives to a socialist outlook; and that Russell is regarded as a progressive socialist who holds certain influence in this battle to be able to possibly “mislead” Chinese people. It therefore indicates that, as in the case of the editor of the *Shanghai Life*, Chen holds not only preconceptions but also misconceptions about Russell. What Chen disapproves of is less Russell himself than it is Zhang and Yang’s interpretations of Russell’s words.

In contrast to Zhang and Yang’s more liberal ideas, which allow for reforms from the top down, either by the government or the capitalists who are the current holders of the political and economic resources of the nation, Chen Duxiu’s political ideal is essentially more radical. He holds a different attitude towards the relations between the capitalists and the proletariat. He insists that his objection to the

⁵¹ Yang was one of Russell’s translators during his trip from Shanghai to Changsha in October and November, before he finally settled in Peking. Before that, Yang had just spent seven years studying economics at the LSE in London.

⁵² See “Discussions”, 7-8, 15-16.

capitalist system derives from the evils and the social-class gap resulting from the development of Western private capitalism; whereas his confidence in the proletariat is built upon the belief that it is they who can ultimately overthrow the threat of the foreign capitalists and win national independence. To Chen, Zhang and Yang's solution of the Chinese problems through a gradual economic and social evolution and reform is only applicable in Western nations, whose modern industry and civilization have been well developed and whose politics are independent from foreign interference. In light of China's weakness in modern education, its lack of government, and the danger that all Chinese might be turned into working class enslaved by foreign capitalists, a proletariat revolution, instead of evolution, becomes the only way towards an ultimate emancipation and prosperity in face of the encroachment of Western capitalism.⁵³

This is the ideology of the revolutionary socialism held by the Chinese communists, first ushered in by Li Ta-Chao in his article "The Victory of Bolshevism" in 1918 in the wake of the establishment of Bolshevik Russia. The Bolshevik Revolution thereafter became a religious belief for the Chinese communists that destroyed "all those dregs of history which can impede the progress of the new movement [the Russian revolution] —such as emperors, nobles, warlords, bureaucrats, militarism, capitalism..." (Teng 248). In this way, the Chinese communists adopted the theory of class war, and the practice of Bolshevik Russia served as a model, as Li Ze-Hou argues, "less as a result of academic arguments, than of a practical need for the solution of social problems" (28).

In this discussion of socialism, both Zhang and Yang (who have a more

⁵³ "Discussions", 20-1.

liberal stand) and Chen (as a more radical communist) agree on socialism as their political ideal, and on the necessity of developing industry. What they disagree with each other is the method for China to develop industry. What singles out Chen and the Chinese communists out is their hostility to anything related to Chinese tradition and foreign capitalism. As was mentioned earlier, in several speeches on education and on problems of social reconstruction during the first month of his stay in China, Russell suggests that education and industrial development should be China's first priority. As to the choice of a suitable political system, Russell mentions that the best way for China's development might be Guild socialism, but only under the condition that education and industrialism get well developed.

This is the first stage of Russell's idea for China's social reconstruction. Not yet knowing China's problems and needs, Russell's suggestion for developing Guild socialism says more about his existing political theory developed from and designed for the Western society with a more mature capitalist system and highly developed industry and better educated citizen. There are several moral grounds for Russell's political ideals: men's creative impulses should suppress the possessive impulses, because the former bring about things everyone can share and enjoy, while the latter result in a desire for possession of goods, wealth or power, and may lead people into conflict and war. Liberty and government should be reconciled. Liberty is protected by democracy against government interference, but liberty also means non-interference with others. While anarchism allows for too much liberty, state socialism suffers from the concentration of power, leaving too much power to the government. For this reason, Russell proposes a universal principle: "autonomy within each politically important group, and a neutral authority for deciding questions involving relations between groups, with the neutral authority resting on a

democratic basis (*Political Ideals* 56). This principle applies both to domestic and international situations. Therefore, Guild socialism, under which “industrial self-government subject to state control as regards the relations of a trade to the rest of the community,” becomes the political system best suited to this principle (36). Although the principle is universal, Russell later makes it clear that his practical target is England or European nations by announcing that “self-government is the road by which England can best approach Communism.” (*Practice and Theory* 182)

It is according to this political ideal that Russell makes his series of suggestions for China’s social reconstruction. In the report of *Chen Bao* on 17 October 1920, Russell proposes Guild socialism as possibly the best way for China to develop industrialism. In its report on 10 November, Russell advocates that, “as to the method for China’s reform, socialism is not suggested at the present stage. China should develop its industry and education. Socialism can then be adopted after the enhancement of people’s knowledge.” (Yuan 30) Again, in Yang Duanliu’s “A Dialogue with Mr. Russell”, which first appeared in *Dongfang Zazhi* (*The Oriental Magazine*) on 25 November 1920, Russell is reported to have said that capitalism, the state and the proletariat are three possible ways to develop industry, among which the state is the best method. He further explains that it is in light of the evil and failure of the West and of Bolshevik Russia that the capitalism and the proletarian methods of industrial development are not desirable. Having been told by Yang that the Chinese government is corrupt, only capable of destruction, Russell then suggests a combination of Chinese capitalists and a foreign working class: not foreign capitalists because of the danger of losing national control to them; not a domestic working class because they are weak and immature.

This series of ideas indicate that Russell does not hold a fixed opinion as to

what China's political system should be. Although his suggestion of socialism mirrors his political ideal, he allows for a delay in its application in consideration of the underdeveloped educational and industrial condition of China (In theory, socialism is supposed to happen in developed nations, and developed industrialism and education are regarded as its preconditions; in practice, Russell attributes the failure of Bolshevik Russia partly to the bad condition of its industry and education.) and Russell's experiment even goes so far so that his choice of capitalists to develop industry, upon learning more about China's reality, appears contrary to his ideals. Although to Russell himself, this is more of a theoretical experiment still open to readjustment, to China's socialists, it is a more urgent issue as ideological propaganda in their construction of nationalist discourses for the emancipation of the semi-colonized China.

Russell's discussions with Chinese socialists demonstrates how Marxist and socialist theories, once translated from their original European context into China, could acquire more radical implications and more thorough acceptance. Chinese communists, such as Chen Duxiu, accept the Marxist doctrine of class-war and associate it with patriotism against foreign intrusion for national independence, thus forming their own theory against imperialist discourse. Though not as radical as the Chinese communists, Russell still suggests China to adopt a socialist outlook to secure China's independence from the foreign powers' suppression. This indicates Russell's challenge to the imperialist discourse, based on his own understanding of China's potential self-actualization. The next part of this chapter examines Russell's reception in Britain, and explores the tension between his text, imperialist discourse, and Marxist theories, so as to interpret the significance of his representation of China.

Russell's Political Ideal

Russell expresses his affinity with the “progressive and public-spirited Chinese” (*Problem of China* 240), whose standpoint Russell claims to take when he tries to propose the outlook for China. As is mentioned earlier, Russell believes in Young China or the ten thousand resolute men as the proper leader of China. With most of his time spent “among those Chinese who had had a modern education” (77), he finds in them the potentiality to realize the desired combination of good qualities of both the West and China. The description of Young China and the ten thousand resolute men echoes Marx's depiction of the Communists in *The Communist Manifesto*:

The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat. (51)

The Communist-proletariat-bourgeois triangular relationship in Marx's discourse may find its equivalent pattern in Russell's discourse of China: Young China (or the ten thousand resolute men)—the Chinese common people—foreign capitalists. It is uncertain how much Russell has drawn directly and consciously from Marx's theory of Communists in forming his own proposal for China. Nevertheless, there are textual evidences to indicate a somewhat indirect influence or unconscious

inheritance. The practically advanced and resolute, and theoretically conscious Communists are given the task in leading the proletariat to form a class to overthrow the bourgeoisie. When applied to a Chinese context, the original pattern turns into something like this: the practically advanced and resolute, and theoretically conscious Young China (or the ten thousand resolute men) should take up the responsibility to lead the whole of Chinese population to win over national independence from the political, economic and military interference of the Western powers.

Firstly, Russell, in his farewell speech before leaving China, proposes to the Chinese to rebuild their society through State socialism. Based on the consideration that China and Bolshevik Russia are similar in their non-industrialized conditions, China should imitate Russia in terms of State socialism, instead of veering towards Anarchist communism, syndicalism, and Guild Socialism that “all presuppose a developed industry and the habits of industrialism”.⁵⁴ The exclusion of the Capitalist way to develop industry implies his sympathy towards the communist ideals and his dissatisfaction with the capitalist system. Meanwhile, with China still lacking a communist party (it was established after Russell’s departure), Russell proposes “ten thousand resolute men” in its place. He does not mean them to be a party to unite the proletariat into a class and overthrow the capitalists. Instead, they refer to a moral demand for public spirit, which is most lacking from a Confucian China, towards democracy and liberty, rather than the execution of class war, which will lead to the second argument.

About the formation of a proletariat class and the coming of class war,

⁵⁴ Russell, “China’s Road to Freedom,” quoted from Quoted from Richard A. Rempel, *The Collected Papers of Bertrand Russell: Uncertain Paths to Freedom, 1919-1922*, 265.

Russell has to say that with the development of capitalism and the subsequent advance in the life of the working class, “time has shown many flaws in Marx’s theories.... nationalism, so far from diminishing, has increased ... the sharpness of the class war has not been maintained” (*Roads to Freedom* 43-4). This comment is uttered against a Western background. Accordingly, in light of the weakness of China’s public spirit and both its capitalist and working classes, Russell alternatively suggests an awareness and increase in patriotism to form a nation state under the leadership of the ten thousand resolute men. .

Lastly, independence from Western powers’ control is essential to Russell for China to adopt the socialist way towards a communist ideal, just as it is necessary to exclude the capitalist way of developing industry within China. However, it “will be possible to obtain most of the needed concessions by purely diplomatic means” (*Problem of China* 245) instead of a universal revolution by the proletariat waged against the bourgeoisie. This also echoes Russell’s belief that socialism can be approached in the UK or Europe by means of evolution rather than revolution.

In conclusion, Russell’s proposal for China’s social reconstruction indicates an active interaction with Marx’s theory and with Russell’s political beliefs in the British context. With a general sympathy towards communist ideals, he allows for an adjustment according to local conditions. As a result, there is a close connection between his ideals for UK and for China.

Chapter Two: China in Travel Writing in the 1930s: Genre and Politics in

Journey to a War (1939)

Wystan and Christopher would probably have chosen China anyway, because of its exotic appeal. If they had hesitated at all, it was because mere sightseeing seemed dilettante and escapist in the crisis atmosphere of the late thirties. Then their minds had been made up for them by the Japanese Army. It had invaded southward from Peking in early July and had attacked Shanghai a month later. China had now become one of the world's decisive battlegrounds. And unlike Spain, it wasn't already crowded with star literary observers. (How could one compete with Hemingway and Malraux?) "We'll have a war all of our very own," said Wystan. They planned to leave England toward the end of the year.

Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind* (1976)⁵⁵

From the 1920s to the 1930s: Political Imagination of Wartime China

Christopher Isherwood's explanation of his travel to China in 1938 in his autobiography *Christopher and His Kind* suggests that, in 1930s Britain, chinoiserie tradition was still an important way through which ordinary citizens in Britain understood China. But real China came to intervene in this traditional discourse of China with the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and through news reports of the war by Western journalists. As Russell's case has demonstrated, his reiteration of the nineteenth-century missionary discourse of national character is not a simple repetition. It intermingles with Russell's concern for the Anglo-Chinese relations in

⁵⁵ See Christopher Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*, 288-9.

the 1920s and therefore demonstrates the interactive nature of the relationship between older orientalist discourses of China and early-twentieth-century perceptions of China.

From the year 1920 when Russell visited China to the year 1938 when Auden and Isherwood traveled to wartime China, the political and social conditions in Britain and China in the nearly twenty years of interwar period provide the background for Britain's renewed perceptions of China. Russell went to China not long after the end of the First World War in 1918 and the success of the Russian Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Disillusioned with Western imperialist capitalism and suspicious that Bolshevism, rather than providing an alternative to capitalism, was a Western ideology that was imposed on an "Asiatic" Russian population.⁵⁶ Russell sought for cultural alternatives in China, presuming that Chinese civilization was fundamentally different from the Western industrialist capitalism. In the meantime, China in 1920 was also experiencing the aftermath of the First World War. The May Fourth Movement started in 1919 as a direct resistance to the decision by the Western powers in the Paris Peace Conference earlier in the same year to transfer German concessions in Shandong to Japan. In this political tension between China and the West, Bolshevism had been introduced to China by Chinese intellectuals to re-imagine China's relations to the West. It is under these circumstances that Bolshevism and socialism became an important debate between Russell and the Chinese in their respective imaginings of the Anglo-Chinese relations.

1938, when Auden and Isherwood (and a lot of other Western travellers to China who were there to witness and report the Sino-Japanese War), was one year after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and one year before the War started in

⁵⁶ Russell, *The Problem of China*, 9-20.

Europe. Compared to the early 1920s (Communist Party of Great Britain was established in 1920 and Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921), mid- and late 1930s was a time when leftist parties (including Communist parties) had grown into an important political force globally. Under these circumstances, the Sino-Japanese War, particularly the Chinese Communist Party's role in the establishment of China's united front to confront the Japanese invasion, became another important site where the British left projected their political ideals.

War drew the attention of many Westerner travellers and reporters to China, who produced texts, photos and films about wartime China for their Western reader. For the British left, the most important texts to understand the Communist condition in China include Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* (1937) and Agnes Smedley's *China Fights Back* (1938), both providing first-hand materials about the Chinese Communist Party. Both books also had their paperback edition published by the Left Book Club, a leftist organization pioneered by Victor Gollancz, for their circulation among the club members. It is through these textual descriptions of the Communist Party that the British left established an imaginary solidarity with China and further incorporated wartime China in their political ideals to inform a home readership.

I choose Auden and Isherwood's *Journey to a War* as the subject of one chapter of this thesis because this text belongs to the body of literature about wartime China which complicate received notions about China in Britain in the 1930s. Compared to the chinoiserie tradition of old Cathay or the discourse of the yellow peril, these representations more realistically reflect a changed Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1930s, just as different receptions of Russell constitute diverse imaginings of the Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1920s. This chapter reads this text in comparison to other travel writings or war reports on China around the same

period. This comparison is facilitated by Auden and Isherwood's textual representation of other Western writers (including Agnes Smedley and Peter Fleming) as part of China's wartime reality they attempt to make sense. On both the real and the textual levels, the encounter of different perspectives in wartime China opens up a space for Western travellers to reimagine China in their transnational approach in coping with the problems of a "combined and uneven" development under a capitalist world-system.

Modes of Reading: Auden and Isherwood's China

Lydia Liu's *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture and Translated Modernity--China, 1900-1937* provides the current chapter with its methodological point of departure. Examining the cross-cultural exchanges between China and the West in the early twentieth century, Liu deviates from the Western theory/local content binary and instead argues that between Western theory and Chinese content, Chinese appropriations of Western theory significantly intervened and necessarily legitimized China alone as the proper site that generated meaning. My study of *Journey to a War* attempts to employ Liu's method through the examination of a reverse route, i.e. how Chinese themes are represented in English texts and how they contribute to the discussions of similar issues back in Britain (for example, socialism, class, resistance and war). This is in response to the predominantly Western genre/local anecdote paradigm in previous analysis of Western travel narrative in general and of *Journey to a War* in particular. Under this paradigm, critics primarily concern themselves with the narrative style of the text in its representation of anecdotes either as Auden and Isherwood's modernist innovation (Stacy Burton), or as their homosexual and leftist resistance to the

imperialist discourse implicit in the mainstream travel narrative (Maureen Moynagh and Marsha Bryant), or as their lack of sympathy towards the Chinese (Nicholas Clifford). As a result, not unlike any other non-Western geographical locations in any other historical period, China in *Journey to a War* is reduced to a mere background position which only passively acquires meaning through the travel writer's narrative style and the genre's implied ideological connotations.

The features of this text relate it, and the study of it as well, to a series of fields of literary studies. First of all, why did the genre of travel literature or war book matter to Western writers in the twentieth century, particularly in the 1930s? How did travel in non-Western geographical locations work for Western travel writers to think over issues at home? Secondly, why and how did China matter as a specific location in the imaginings of Anglo-American writers in the 1930s? How do we compare *Journey to a War* to other English travel writings on China around the same period? What can we make out of the similarities and differences between them? How do they justify or problematize the idea of travel writing as a genre that emphasizes homogeneity rather than divergence? Thirdly, how do we position this travel narrative within the scholarship about Auden and Isherwood in particular and about the generation of British writers in the 1930s in general?

Most of the existing discussions of *Journey to a War* agree on the uniqueness of the text's narrative style, though for very different reasons. In *Travel Narrative and the Ends of Modernity* (2013), Stacy Burton claims that the narrative of *Journey to a War*, like other twentieth-century travel writings in general, creates "radically new means for representing travel by juxtaposing narratives, poems, quotations, and captioned photographs" (21). These texts tend to be more "autobiography, literariness, and explicitly subjective observation" than they are "ethnography,

documentation, and claims of scientific objectivity” (2), typical of the European travel narrative prior to the twentieth century that bears an imperialist ideology. Regarding the former as a modernist innovation that corresponds to the new social and cultural context of the twentieth century, Burton contends that the travel narrative constitutes “a strategy for thinking through modernity” that “represent[s] subjective response to profound, often violent cultural transformation” (3). Burton’s emphasis on the correspondence between this new narrative style of the twentieth-century European travel writing and the modern condition of Western capitalism tends to undermine the diverse methods different texts employ to represent similar themes, subjects and topics, which in turn suggests their diverging stances and responses to problems of capitalism. Meanwhile, this analysis does not specify the significance of non-European geographical locations to Western travellers. For example, Burton presents Peter Fleming and Auden/Isherwood’s travel writing as sharing the same self-doubting and ironic tone.⁵⁷ While she agrees with Mary Pratt in arguing for the inseparability of the study in genre from the critique of ideology,⁵⁸ she does not explain how the common narrative style may express different ideological constructions about the same subjects. Burton’s examination of the Western travel writing in the long twentieth century sheds light upon the representational changes in accordance to social and cultural changes in longer historical cycles. What I would like to do in this chapter, however, is to problematize this similarity in style and examine instead how Auden/Isherwood in *Journey to a War* and Peter Fleming in *One’s Company* (1934) represent similar subjects, including communism, missionaries, captives, translators, etc., in different ways, and

⁵⁷ See Stacy Burton, *Travel Narrative and the Ends of Modernity*, 21.

⁵⁸ Burton, 5-6. See also Mary Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 5, 6, 10.

how this difference regarding Chinese issues corresponds to the ideological diversity about nation and class at home.

In *“A Truthful Impression of the Country”: British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949* (2001), Nicholas Clifford agrees with Burton in identifying both Auden/Isherwood and Fleming’s travel narrative as exposing uncertainty and self-claimed ignorance about events they experienced in China. However, rather than seeing the detachment in their narrative as reflecting the authors’ modernist innovation in response to the declined Western imperialism, as Burton does, Clifford distinguishes this narrative style “not only from the nineteenth century certainties of Isabella Bird’s truthful impression but from the modern certainties of the foreign correspondent as well” (152). Bird’s admiration for the British Empire and Agnes Smedley’s communism are the respective examples of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century certainty in English travel narrative. Holding certainty to be the site of generating significance, whether in the form of an imperialist discourse in Bird’s case, or as Smedley’s critique of imperialism, Clifford dismisses the lack of certainty in *Journey to a War* as Auden and Isherwood’s schoolboyish apathy to China’s real suffering and thus depicts them as “sentimental narrators”. Clifford appropriates the concept of the “sentimental narrator” from Mary Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992). He defines them as those “who place in the foreground their own identities rather than those of the lands and peoples among whom they travel” (144). Nevertheless, Pratt’s analysis of the sentimental travel writing of the late eighteenth-century examines the narrators in relation to the institutions that employed them back in the UK and reveals the coincidence between this subjective and interactive narrative style and the

emergence of the commercial capitalist hegemony.⁵⁹

To borrow Pratt's method of analysis, rather than merely the term, it is more productive to examine the home institutions that initiated the travel to China by such authors as Auden/Isherwood, Fleming, and Smedley, and to explore the publishers and the readership of their texts. Fleming came to China as a war correspondent for the *Times*; it was Faber and Faber who funded Auden and Isherwood's journey in China and later published their book; both Smedley's *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army* (1938) and Edgar Snow's *Red Star over China* (1937) had their Left Book Club edition and circulated among the decent size of the club's membership. I would like to examine the textual representations of China in relation to the context that concerns the connections between the individual writers, the relevant institutions, and their ideological contentions. In addition, Clifford demands sympathy for China from Western travel writers by asking "when did travellers begin to realize that Their war was becoming Our war?" (151) and sets Snow's *Red Star over China* as a typical example that "allowed its Western readers to identify the Chinese cause with their own" (156). However, neither "Western readers" nor the "Chinese cause" need be taken as a homogeneous entity. What needs to be further queried is what Western readers these different writers and their publishers were addressing? Which Chinese cause did they identify themselves with? What sympathy and for whom? These nuanced details with regard to the various ways they represented Chinese themes and the ideological connections they shared through the publishers with readers back in Britain provide necessary links between the English travel writing about China in the 1930s as a literary genre and a critique of ideology as Pratt proposes.

⁵⁹ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 69-85.

Both Maureen Moynagh and Marsha Bryant agree with Stacy Burton in thinking of the narrative of *Journey to a War* as a form of resistance. In Moynagh's "Revolutionary Drag in Auden and Isherwood's *Journey to a War*" (2004) and in Bryant's *Auden and Documentary in the 1930s* (1997), both scholars queer Auden and Isherwood's textual uncertainty as the authors' homosexual drag, which politicizes the narrative and challenges the implied imperialist, masculine and heterosexual norm of the travel writing and war book in the 1930s. For Bryant, the prototype of this norm is British intellectuals' cross-class representation of the workers in the documentary movement in the 1930s, whereas for Moynagh, it is the British narrative about the Spanish Civil War. They contend that Auden and Isherwood's conscious parody of these norms, with Peter Fleming as a typical representative, derives from their gay identity and leftist political stance. Nevertheless, under their critique, the significance of Auden and Isherwood's text constantly returns to the British/European context with reference to the British textual prototypes. Even though Moynagh argues that "the binary around which solidarity with a [political] cause is articulated is less original/copy than it is native/foreigner or intellectual/peasant, and it is divisions such as these that Auden and Isherwood struggle with in their efforts to enact solidarity with the Chinese" (127), she does not further explain how the text articulates its political commitment within the native/foreigner or intellectual/peasant binary with its Chinese subjects, nor why its cross-cultural and cross-class representations of China have to be binary. In both scholars' analysis, the homosexual drag is performed primarily within an original/copy binary in which China is absent. As a consequence, their studies encourage me to ask whether it is possible to examine the authors' homosexuality out of this binary and out of an analysis of pure style or genre, but instead bring in

the Chinese context and subject (in the form of the authors' depiction of Chinese men and their physical features, for example) as an element that may have possibly refreshed Auden and Isherwood's self-identification and cultural imagining.

In a similar vein, Hugh Haughton identifies Auden and Isherwood's "frivolity" as a form of critique that concerns the fundamental questions of war, travel, travel writing, and China's relation to the West. This narrative style, to Haughton as well as to Moynagh and Bryant, invariably connects to a representational crisis in a cross-cultural and cross-class context that testifies to the limits of cognizing the relationship between China and the West. To Clifford, this crisis derives from the authors' lack of sympathy that ultimately results from a foreign presence in China as the Western imperial legacy. Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan elaborate this more fully in *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (1998), when they argue that even for "sympathetic narrators", "There are gaps that the genre itself cannot help but create. Travel writing reinstalls difference even as it claims to dismantle it; the humanist desire for reconciliation ... tends to founder on the very (socioeconomic) conditions that make travel writing possible" (109). Both analyses by Clifford and Holland/Huggan remind us of Pratt's definition of the "sentimental narrator", whose discourse of reciprocity with local residents in reality only reveals an ideological occupation of local subjectivity by European Expansionism. As Haughton has identified, the form of travel writing, and thus the interpretation of its representational crisis, necessarily associate themselves with the relationship between the narrator and the subject, or between the West and China. At the same time, Haughton points out that compared to other travel books about China, Isherwood "prefers to register 'subtle and chaotic impressions' rather than the imaginary 'China' of the Western 'dream' or the rhetoric of 'Chinese propaganda'"

(159). In other words, Isherwood provides a different method of history writing from either the colonialist or anti-colonialist grand narratives which invariably fall into the (Western) power/ local resistance binary. Therefore, both on the textual and contextual level, reading *Journey to a War* as travel writing by British leftist writers in the 1930s requires a new paradigm of historiography to examine how this textual reciprocity, i.e. the relationship between the narrator and its subjects and between the West and China, is represented and why.

This chapter restores China's significance to Auden and Isherwood's reflections on possible connections Europe and China can establish. It argues that the self-doubting narrative style of travel writing in twentieth-century Europe is not unquestionably associated with the anti-imperialist ideology. Western travel writers establish their relationship with China through representations of socialism, communism and class. Via different representations of these subjects, they show diversity rather than uniformity in the imagination of the Anglo-Chinese relations. This method presupposes an interactive and interconnected relationship between the West and China. The question is to explore its textual representations, and to examine how far it is reciprocal, and where and why this reciprocity falters. More specifically, it argues for the text's representation of China's Communist Party, intellectuals, working class/coolies, or even the homosexual desire in the Chinese context as an integral part of the British left's reflections on the problems of home culture. This chapter will examine these subjects in separate sections to see how each concept traveled from Britain with the authors, merged with the Chinese context, and then circulated back to Britain in the form of a travel narrative, transformed.

Native Informant and Chinese Translator: Ethics of Representation

For Western travellers, the native informant or translator makes up an important source of their acquisition of knowledge of local reality. In postcolonial studies, the concept of “native informant” is an important site for the critique of colonialism. As Henry Staten has argued, “native informant”, as “an artifact of colonialist ideology”, is examined to “trace the complex way in which certain Western texts both open and seal off a certain space of alterity, and this place, while it is not identical with real aboriginality, communicates with it in some way” (112). The way in which each of these Western texts gets access to the “inaccessible cultural otherness”, therefore, implicates the ethics the Western authors practice in their cultural translation. To identify the ethics of each Western author requires us to examine the “context within which subjectivity must in each case be located” (111). My appropriation of the concept of “native informant” in this section borrows from this methodological significance to examine the moral stance of its Western creators within a specific temporal and spatial context.

Auden and Isherwood’s journey from the metropolitan Hankow (Hankou) to the Eastern front (mostly along rural areas) marks a process of diminishing frame of cultural and linguistic reference for these two English writers, who “spoke no Chinese, and possessed no special knowledge of Far Eastern affairs” (Auden 13). In metropolitan environments like Hankow, the foreign presence was a convenient source of information for them. Chinese informants were also readily available through foreign or local translators. Rural areas near the front, however, were a more different and difficult presence for Western travellers. This is not to suggest that Auden and Isherwood’s representation of the former, the more cosmopolitan informants, either foreign or Chinese, is in any way more transparent or innocent

than that of the latter as intermediaries to learn about the reality of wartime China. Because the difference between them is characterized by only “a scale of degrees of closeness to and distance from the fully constituted ‘metropolitan subject’” (Staten 116). To Auden and Isherwood, their sense of realness of wartime China is “a single, integrated scene” (Auden 32), one side of which is the Japanese bombing of the Chinese city, the other side the calmness and tranquility of the domestic life in the foreign concession of the same city.⁶⁰ The two writers’ journey from the urban to the rural area in their search of the war front is a constituent element of this integrated scene. Nevertheless, the degree of difference does decide the different methods of representing the urban and the rural subjects. For now, my discussion of the text from the perspective of the “native informant” refers specifically to the authors’ witness of the relics of a body and their effort to decipher its meaning via their Chinese informants.

Journey to a War thus records Auden and Isherwood’s discovery of the body of a Chinese with a group of Chinese villagers in a village near the Eastern front: “On a waste plot of land beyond the houses a dog was gnawing what was, only too obviously, a human arm. A spy, they told us, had been buried there after execution a day or two ago; the dog had dug the corpse half out of the earth” (Auden 112). This correlation between a body and its identity as a spy the Chinese informants make is soon challenged in the subsequent dialogue between the two writers and their Chinese translator, Chiang:

We asked whether there were many spies about. Yes, quite a number. The peasants round here are very poor and the Japanese offer them handsome rewards for treason. How had this particular man been caught? He was a

⁶⁰ *Journey to a War*, 32-3.

peasant who had crossed the Grand Canal by night and come to Ma Yuan to get news. He had been so indiscreet as to ask the General's cook where the General lived. The cook, who suspected him already, had exclaimed: "Oh, you spy!" And the peasant had hung his head and blushed. He was arrested immediately. This is Chiang's version of the story—obviously garbled. But no doubt, from time to time, there really is a miscarriage of justice. The Chinese take no chances. (112)

Denise Lewis connects this anecdote in Isherwood's Travel-Diary (which forms the main part of *Journey to a War*) to two photos from Auden's Picture Commentary to prove the narrative consistency of *Journey to a War* and the cross-referencing between the book's different components:

According to their Chinese informants, the alleged spy, a poor peasant, had been so naive as to simply ask a Chinese general's cook where his master's tent was. Isherwood explains that many Chinese peasants were starving and were willing to work for the Japanese because they paid well. If we go back to the two photographs, then, the captions "The Innocent" and "The Guilty" become even more ambiguous now because they could equally apply to ordinary Chinese soldiers or sad wretches like the peasant spy in Isherwood's anecdote.... Once again here we see how images, ideas, and figures in one of the hybrid travel book's component parts or genres are dispersed and repeated throughout the other parts and genres. (288- 289)

In Lewis's analysis, no necessary distinction is made between the Western interrogators and their Chinese interlocutor. This distinction manifests itself as the difference between the two questions (question marks) and the answers following them. It is further revealed through the narrative intrusion upon the truthfulness of

Chiang's version of the story in the form of an authorial comment, which helps frame the Chinese narrative. Nor is there any explanation about how the interchangeability between the images of Chinese soldiers and the peasant spy intervenes in the captions categorized by "The Innocent" and "The Guilty", or how the ambiguity of this categorization speaks of "the hybrid travel book's overall politics and what James Phelan would call its 'ethics of rhetorical purpose'" (290). Examining the same textual evidences, Marsha Bryant argues against the existence of a consistent cross-referencing between the photos and the diary. She contends that while the pictures of "The Innocent" and "The Guilty" put under the general category of "War Zone" are expected to portray soldiers in the military front, the diary's possible correspondence to the pictures is either the peasant spy or the civilians dead from Japanese bombing. This unsatisfactory substitution of the civilian for the military questions the two authors' ability to represent the actual war front and simultaneously marks their deconstruction of the typical British war narrative characterized by its masculinity and imperialism.⁶¹ Bryant's analysis creates a prototype/copy binary that reduces the genre of war narrative as being exclusively imperialist and masculine. Neither of the two scholars satisfactorily answers the confusion the two pictures causes: why the categorization of the innocent and the guilty? Who is guilty and why? How does the cross-referencing between the Travel-Diary and the Photo Commentary blur the boundary between the civilian and the military, or how does this confusion disrupt the binary categorization and thus complicate the anti-imperialist sentiment?

The key to this question lies in the way we interpret the dialogue between the two writers and their Chinese translator, and in distinguishing between their

⁶¹ Bryant, *Auden and Documentary in the 1930s*, 130-135.

competing interpretations of a silenced body. In the Chinese version, the peasant's action to hang his head and blush symbolizes a sense of guilt that makes the story a moral parable of the Chinese nationalist sentiment. Isherwood's critique of the miscarriage of justice, however, interrupts this ready association between an anonymous body and the Chinese nationalist sentiment. It questions whether the peasant is truly a spy or is wronged by other Chinese blinded by their nationalist sentiment. This deconstruction of Chiang's narrative thus constitutes the authors' vigilance against the wrong the collective can do through ideological propaganda to individuals, regardless of this ideology being imperialism or anti-imperialist nationalism. This authorial suspicion of nationalism is in accord with Auden and Isherwood's overt disbelief in China's overall war propaganda that was prevalent among different classes of the Chinese.

The categorization of "The Innocent" is more easily identifiable and has a more stable correspondence to the narrative in the Travel-Diary.⁶² Within the context of the Sino-Japanese War and with Auden and Isherwood's leftist stance against fascism, it was easier for the reader of *Journey to a War* to associate the picture with Isherwood's narrative and identify its anti-imperialist morality. There was one occasion in which both authors witnessed the death of Chinese civilians in a Japanese air raid in the city of Hankow. The juxtaposition of the innocent bodies and the Japanese propaganda provides one of the most satirical case against Japanese imperialism:

The Japanese celebrated it [the Emperor's birthday] in their usual manner with a big air-raid (...) as we stood beside one old woman, whose brains were soaking obscenely through a little towel, I saw the blood-caked mouth open

⁶² Bryant, 133-4.

and shut, and the hand beneath the sack-covering clench and unclench. Such were the Emperor's birthday presents. (172, 175)

The categorization of "The Guilty", once located in the context of this dialogue about the death of a Chinese "spy", provides both an interruption as well as a continuation of this anti-imperialist narrative. It is an interruption in that it challenges the expectation of the guilty being the Japanese. In the meantime, Isherwood's reinterpretation of the body of the suspected peasant spy subverts the categorization of "The Guilty" and "The Innocent" by suggesting that the guilty may in reality be the innocent. It disrupts the imperialist-local binary frame of reference and complicates the Chinese context by examining the influence of ideology on the individual within the national boundary. This continuation in critiquing the collective in defense of the individual applies to other situations in the book. For example, in face of an isolated, scared and silent Japanese captive surrounded by a group of grinning and intimidating Chinese guards, Auden and Isherwood rejected again Chiang's story of the Japanese as an invention, "for the prisoner spoke only his native language, and no one present could understand it" (Auden 97). The denial of any interpretation of the silenced subject maintains a resistance to any discursive construction as ideological propaganda. For another instance, the authors noticed the different reaction of a Chinese doctor among a group of people at the news of the Chinese victory at Tai-er-chwang (Tai'erzhuang), "We were all excited, except for one of the Chinese doctors, who became sad and thoughtful. He had a Japanese wife" (147). The presence of a heterogeneous individual always threatens to disrupt the construction of a homogeneous identity.

On a different note, however, even though Auden and Isherwood are suspicious of the guilt of the dead peasant, their critique of the miscarriage of justice

presupposes the presence of a standard for justice. They do not intend to challenge the legitimacy of the nationalist morality implicit in Chiang's narrative. Nor do they answer the question whether the peasant is guilty if he were really a spy. As a result, Isherwood's reinterpretation of the Chinese parable constitutes an alternative moral parable and points to Auden and Isherwood's moral dilemma: nationalist spirit is necessary in fighting against imperialism, but as a reigning ideology that stresses on homogeneity, would not nationalism under certain circumstances repeat imperialism's injustice done to individuals of a heterogeneous nature?

Peter Fleming in and outside of *Journey to a War*: Politics of Representation

Both Maureen Moynagh and Marsha Bryant base their analysis of Auden and Isherwood's leftist and anti-imperialist identity on the two writers' parody through camp performance of Peter Fleming as the prototype of the masculine and imperialist Western travellers. As Moynagh has argued:

In presenting someone like Fleming, whose conservative politics and upper-class allegiance (as opposed to Auden and Isherwood's upper-class treason) would seem to rule him out as a revolutionary model, as their guide to the front, Auden and Isherwood ultimately mock a pseudo-heroism and its associated hyper-masculinity, rather than anything they might construe as 'genuine' heroism. (131)

However, as Lewis comments on Bryant, constructing Fleming as "the living embodiment of not merely the 'conservative social order' but also all of Western patriarchy and Western imperialism" is "a very heavy load" (271), and to "reduce Fleming to a mere stalking horse for a recuperative gay writings project ... does little justice to the subtlety of their [Auden and Isherwood] narrative strategies" (273).

What remains unanswered is how to locate Fleming's political stance within specific textual evidence and in relation to specific Chinese subject, given that Fleming himself is a travel writer? In other words, what is the source of Fleming's image as a conservative? How does he represent China? Again, I am using the concept of the "native informant" to examine how Fleming in *One's Company* represents his Chinese informant and how the different strategy of representation speaks of his political and ethical divergence from Auden and Isherwood. An interpretation of Fleming's text will shed light upon our understanding of the nuanced narrative strategies Auden and Isherwood employed in their textual representation of Fleming in *Journey to a War*.

Fleming traveled to the anti-Communist front in the Southeastern Jiangxi Province to gather firsthand source of the Chinese Communist movement in the context of the Chinese civil war in 1933. He approached a Communist captive held in a Nationalist Government Reform House:

The head prisoner was a remarkable young man. He had spent six years in the ranks of the Third Red Army Corps; then, sickening not so much of the theory of Communism as of its bloody practice, he had with difficulty escaped and surrendered to the government forces (...) I wondered whether there were many more like him within the Red Areas. At a guess I should say that there are, for it has always seemed to me that the degree of success attained by the Communist movement in China must be largely due to its power of attracting, and exploiting to the full, young men of exceptional ability. (Fleming 242-3)

Here the conversational form used by Isherwood to present his Chinese informant turns into the Western narrator's first-person recount of his informant's story in

support of a preconceived conclusion. This is not to suggest that the Chinese prisoner is in any way merely made up or the information he provided is untrue. The point is that the fact Fleming unhesitatingly received this information as a truth claim and developed from it his further speculations of the Chinese Communists reveals a methodological deficiency and a political prejudice. There is no authorial suspicion of the possible ideological distortion, conscious or unconscious, by the “Reform House” done to a “captive’s” narrative about an opposing ideology, namely Communism. This is why a book review of Edgar Snow’s *Red Star over China* (1937) in the *Left News* compares Fleming unfavourably to Snow by arguing that the former has “an air of knowledge clocking essential ignorance which one associates with that very knowledgeable young man, Mr. Peter Fleming.”⁶³ Methodologically, Fleming claims that:

Much of the information comprised in this survey was known, at any rate in its general outline, in British official quarters in Peking and Shanghai (...) I cannot claim that the new information which I was able to obtain, or the old information which I was able to confirm or modify, was of a nature to revolutionize the best theories already current about the situation; but perhaps it gave them a sounder basis, and I think it was worth collecting.
(181)

As it turns out, the Chinese informant serves as new information that merely consolidates Fleming’s preconceived idea about Communism and also conforms to the British official ideology. The informant’s conclusion, rephrased by Fleming, very much resembles Fleming’s understanding of Communism as platonic love: “It is all right as a theory, it is all right as an experiment, but after that it too often fails to

⁶³ See Richard Goodman’s book review of *Red Star over China* in the October issue of the *Left News* in 1937, 522-4.

maintain its original nature” (187). This attitude testifies to Steve Nicholson’s observation of Britain’s theatrical portrayal of communism in the first decades of the twentieth century, “For most people in Britain, bolshevism was not seen to embody a plausible political alternative, but as evil incarnate...” and that one of the three basic narrative frames about the danger of the left-wing ideology was “an element of impractical idealism” (5).

Back in *Journey to a War*, I choose a paragraph that depicts Auden and Isherwood’s dialogue with Fleming which has escaped the examination of the above-mentioned scholars. The text presents Fleming straight in dialogue with Auden and Isherwood about Chinese civilization, so that Fleming is framed into the position of an interlocutor:

At supper we drank cognac and began an argument on the meaning of the word Civilization. Had China anything to learn from the West? Peter thought not. “The Chinese”, he kept repeating, “have got everything taped.” “Surely”, I protested, “you can’t pretend that the coolie is well off, in his present condition? Isn’t he ever to hear Beethoven? Or see your wife act?” “Oh,” said Peter airily, “he’s got them both pretty well taped.” (Auden 231)

With Auden and Isherwood’s reinterpretation of the concept of “civilization” through the class rhetoric from a leftist point of view, the ostensible authority Isherwood confers upon Fleming as a model traveller and a Chinese expert here becomes unstable. In fact, Fleming had commented on the issue of Chinese civilization four years earlier in *One’s Company* than when this dialogue happened in 1938. He argued that “Neither the theory nor the practice of Communism is indigenous to China. The Chinese are individualists, and their unit of community is the family” (181). Fleming’s comparison of Communism to Chinese civilization is not so much a

diagnosis of Chinese problems than it is a rhetorical strategy to prove the impracticability of Communism, in order to arouse “the world’s interest in, and sympathy for, China” as “the only country whose armies were actively and continuously engaging the forces of Bolshevism in the field” (225-6). The incongruity between Communism and what Fleming constructs as an essentialist outlook of Chinese culture as individualistic thus justifies the position of China’s Nationalist government (under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek) as an integral part of the global alliance among the established governments against Communism. Fleming’s support for China against Japan in the context of the Sino-Japanese War in 1938 in essence is in no difference to his sympathy for the Chiang regime against the “red rebels” in the context of China’s civil war in 1934.

As British war journalists and fellow travellers, Auden and Isherwood appreciate Flemings’ eloquent speech to their Chinese friend, “although war correspondents are supposed to be absolutely impartial, we do not think we should be going too far in asking him [the Chinese’s general] to drink with us to a Chinese victory” (Auden 208). They would also readily agree with such a political stance of alliance between Britain and China against fascism. This agreement registers a common British response to the imposing threat of fascism in the 1930s. However, travel writing’s political imaginings of the geographical otherness are also characterized by a combination of sameness and difference, as is revealed here by the case of Auden/Isherwood and Fleming with regard to a Chinese context. Auden and Isherwood’s question “Had China anything to learn from the West?” probes into the issue of class division and social injustice. In relation to their critique of the Chinese cruelty to kill the Chinese spy in the name of patriotism, *Journey to a War* does not refer to this cruelty as an inherent Chinese characteristic. Its deconstruction

of nationalism indicates how ideology determines the cruelty of some and the misery of the other, so that it puts human cruelty into a historical causality.⁶⁴ Fleming's ambivalent and somewhat complacent answer to the same question, on the other hand, sticks to the notion of China and the West's incommensurability and reiterates the Orientalist binary opposition.

Wartime China, the British Left, and Agnes Smedley

Journey to a War's inquiry into the justice of nationalism complicates the British left's construction of Chinese nationalism as an unquestionable equivalence of a socialist democracy. For example, in his analysis of the Sino-Japanese War in the February issue of the *Left News* in 1937 (the monthly magazine published by the Left Book Club), the British Marxist theorist John Strachey thought of Chinese nationalism, or China's united front that was built on the Nationalist and Communist cooperation, as an equally important force as the Spanish or French popular front in resistance to fascism.⁶⁵ This sympathy towards China was shared in the late 1930s in Britain among people of different political persuasions. For the British left in particular, China was attractive due to its Communist movement earlier in the Long March and later in the Communist Party's successful participation in establishing the united front against the Japanese invasion. Its knowledge of the Chinese Communist Party came from several key journalists' innovative firsthand experience with the Chinese Communists in Northwestern China.⁶⁶

Before Auden and Isherwood's journey to China and the publication of

⁶⁴ I refer to Eric Hayot's analysis of Bertrand Russell's description of Chinese callousness in *The Hypothetical Mandarin*, 193.

⁶⁵ John Strachey, "Far East and the Future", in *Left News*, February 1937, 226-31.

⁶⁶ For a discussion of the British left's relations to China, See Tom Buchanan, *East Wind: China and the British Left, 1925-1976*, 48-63.

Journey to a War in 1938, the American journalist Edgar Snow's influential book *Red Star over China* had been published in 1937 by the Left Book Club as the first comprehensive English report of the Chinese Communist movement. In 1938, the Left Book Club published Agnes Smedley's *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the Eighth Route Army*, which reports the author's firsthand experience with the Chinese Communists in the Northwestern front in 1937 in wartime China, right before Auden and Isherwood's arrival in China. In his review of Smedley's book in the December issue of the *Left News* in 1938, John Strachey showed his admiration for the Chinese Red Army's commitment to the mobilization of the peasants for resistance through all familiar methods of propaganda. Rethinking the traditional British imperialist construction of an unchanging East, Strachey subverted the traditional binary between a progressive West and a conservative East:

Here was change, irrevocable, profound, carving and cutting into the very basis of the lives of that vastest of all homogeneous masses of human beings, the Chinese peasantry. Sometimes such books as these make one feel it is we in the West who are unchanging, caught in the toils of our own past progress, unable to free ourselves enough from those once successful traditions to make the next step forward; that it is precisely the peoples of Asia who will next break through. (1086)

Strachey's reinterpretation of the Chinese Communists' mobilization and education of the peasants as politically progressive and modern reflects the British left's demand for establishing a domestic popular front to confront fascism and its urgent need to push forward this idea through the mobilization of the domestic working class. It simultaneously registers a critique of Britain's conservative National Government in its pacifist concession to both German

and Japanese fascist aggression. Strachey defined modernity not in the traditional West/East binary. Instead, he sought for a global socialist alliance to defend against the capitalist conservative at home and global fascism. This is why Strachey concludes his review of Smedley by arguing that:

But the real lesson of this book, just as of Snow's book, is that their struggle and our struggle are interdependent. China can only strike back successfully if we can create a sufficiently united, alert and intelligent progressive movement in this country to prevent Britain striking down the new China together with every other progressive thing in the world. Equally the British people can only be saved from going down into the horror of a new imperialist war against one or other of the rapacious fascist empires... if the Chinese people, the Spanish people, the people of France, and above all of the Soviet Union--in a word if the peoples of the world--can win their struggle. (1086)

Although Auden/Isherwood and Strachey share the same anti-fascist sentiment, Strachey's construction of Chinese nationalism as an unquestionably progressive and democratic force differentiates him from *Journey to a War's* disquiet about nationalism's potential fallacy. To a large extent, Strachey's representation of Chinese nationalism derives from Smedley's textual construction of the Eighth Route Army in *China Fights Back*. The way Smedley presents the function of the Chinese translators is comparable to *Journey to a War's* representation of Auden and Isherwood's Chinese informants and translator. An examination of the former helps reveal Smedley's different political and moral sentiment from that of Auden and Isherwood. It will also illuminate the diverging forms of appropriating China and Chinese nationalism among the British left.

Chinese translators come into view on two occasions in *China Fights Back*. On one occasion Smedley represents her Chinese translator, an intellectual, as being indifferent to an injured young peasant. Irritated by the translator's "ancient attitude of the 'intellectual aristocrats' of China", Smedley thus portrays her anger directed at the Chinese translator, "We are a group of people from the Eighth Route Army. The strength of this army, and of the Communists who lead it, has never been in military force, but chiefly in its intimate, organic connection with the people" (31). The plural form "we" marks not only Smedley's self-identification as a member of the Party but also her awareness that the middle-class status of herself and her Chinese translator differed from the Chinese poor, who Smedley claims make up 95 percent of China's total population.⁶⁷ Her solution to this class division reveals a self-image of the organic intellectual and a strong leftist political belief in the party's mobilization and education of the people as its political foundation. This self-portrayal of the intellectual resembles the image of the world citizen proposed by Victor Gollancz, founder of the Left Book Club. In an editorial in the October issue of the *Left News* in 1937, written partly as a response to Japan's massacre of Chinese citizens in Nanking (or Nanjing), Gollancz reacted to one Club member's resignation of membership for the reason of him being a book lover rather than a politician:

We have in common something that transcends, or rather underlays, our professions and occupations, our hobbies and our personal joys; namely, our citizenship of the world. And this citizenship means something active--a joining with others in the control of our destinies, on a basis of knowledge and understanding. (Gollancz 520)

Read under the background of the Nanking massacre and the Spanish Civil

⁶⁷ Smedley, *China Fights Back*, 23.

War, this concept of world citizenship bears an unmistakable political and cosmopolitan characteristic. On a different note, however, this concept of world citizenship appears to have a totalitarian tendency when Gollancz prioritizes politics over books, or arts in general, when he argues that “I would destroy with my own hands the last record of the last piece of music in the world if by doing so I could save flesh and blood from the torments it is now enduring” (520). Similarly, when Smedley mentions a similar event in Chinese history on censorship, where Chin Shih Hwang Ti, the first emperor who united China, buried hundreds of Confucian scholars alive due to their objection to his programs. Seeing Hwang Ti as “a man of progress”, Smedley defends him against the Confucian scholars as the incarnation of the Chinese feudal system. Connecting history to the present, she continues:

I must say that after years in China, after having seen the devastating effect of Confucian thought on people, I sympathize with Hwang Ti. While I don't think he should have buried the scholars alive, I think he did well in getting rid of them. A better method would have been to put them on construction gangs, digging some of his great canals, making his famous roads and marvelous stone bridges that still stand. And he might have spared many of the other men of China who were useful, and used the Confucian scholars build the Great Wall. (185-6)

Smedley's proposal to punish these Confucian scholars by forcing them to do manual labour echoes her earlier effort in persuading her Chinese translator to respect and help the poor. What is a traditional oppositional class division between the intellectual aristocrats and the lower classes becomes an organic connection between the present-day middle-class intellectuals and the lower classes.⁶⁸ Smedley's

⁶⁸ I borrow this idea from David Cannadine's discussion of the changing visions of British class in

reinterpretation of history is strongly influenced by a Marxist historiography by presenting a communist utopia for modern China. Nevertheless, Smedley's sympathy for the people appeals to a material and economic rather than political progress. The people have to rely only on a strong and sympathetic leadership of the Communist Party. As Douglas Kerr argues, "Smedley's vision of Chinese modernity was not one of urban sophistication, but of a redemptive puritan plainness to be discovered in the army, the peasants, and the revolution" (166). Under such circumstances, the moral strictness of the Communist Party becomes the crucial source of the Party's legitimate leadership of the people. Thus, Smedley's representation of the Communist Party emphasizes its sexual ascetics, impersonal love and affection, its "virginity", and its self-restrain and self-discipline.⁶⁹

Smedley's organic intellectual functions to bridge the gap between the Communist leadership and the people and between the middle-class intellectuals and the lower-class labourers. In other words, she substitutes her political loyalties for actual class divisions to construct a socialist utopia. This positive representation of the Communist-governed Northwestern China serves as a key source of the British left's confidence in the Chinese Communist Party and in Chinese nationalism as a progressive and democratic force, as has been shown by John Strachey's reading of Smedley.

Smedley in *Journey to a War*: How far Left? Intellectuals and Politics

In their visit to the Wuhan University, Auden and Isherwood met Ling Shuhua, or Madame Chen Yuan, among a group of Chinese professors. She gave

Class in Britain. Particularly chapter 4 on "The Twentieth Century: Social Identities and Political Identities," 106-62.

⁶⁹ See Smedley, *China Fights Back*, 34, 36, and 254.

them each a fan, painted with the landscapes near the lake beside which the university buildings were located. Ling also asked them to bring back to Virginia Woolf a little box that contained a carved ivory skull.⁷⁰ This was one of the occasions in which Auden and Isherwood communicated with Chinese intellectuals in China. Ling Shuhua, Virginia Woolf, the landscape painting on a fan, and the carved ivory skull together reveal a literary history in which the Bloomsbury intellectuals established what Patricia Laurence names “shared affinities” with a group of Chinese intellectuals, of whom Ling was a member. This notion of “shared affinities” seeks for an alternative paradigm of literary studies that sees traditional Chinese aesthetic culture as a constituent element of the Bloomsbury modernism.⁷¹ However, Auden and Isherwood’s encounters with their Chinese intellectual counterparts indicate alternative patterns of cultural exchange which help generate a series of questions: What intellectuals? Affinities shared between whom and about what?

For instance, on one occasion when Auden and Isherwood had the chance to meet “the leading Chinese intellectuals at present in Hankow” at a party, they were more confused than satisfied with this cross-cultural communication by asking:

Are we really communicating with each other at all? Beaming at our hosts we exchange worlds: ‘England’, ‘China’, ‘Poetry’, ‘Culture’, ‘Shakespeare’, ‘International Understanding’, ‘Bernard Shaw’ -- but the words merely mean, ‘We are pleased to see you.’ They are just symbols of mutual confidence, like swapping blank cheques. (Auden 155)

To Auden and Isherwood, the task of their Chinese journey primarily centered

⁷⁰ *Journey to a War*, 159-61.

⁷¹ See Patricia Laurence, “Shared affinities: Katherine Mansfield, Ling Shuhua and Virginia Woolf”, 37-52. Also see Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes: Bloomsbury, Modernism and China*, Introduction, 1-36.

around such essential questions as China's prospect to win the war and the Chinese Communist Party's role in the war. They routinely asked these questions in their interviews with all categories of people in China. Under these more or less political and ideological circumstances, the "shared affinities" between the Bloomsbury writers and their Chinese counterparts with regard to a high and aesthetic traditional Chinese culture did not suffice to provide Auden and Isherwood with satisfactory patterns for understanding the culture of the other. Which culture? Understanding of what? The transcendental and universal implication of "Culture" and "International Understanding" presumes a similarity between high cultures of both Britain and China. By contrast, Auden and Isherwood's query of these notions' lack of substance suggests a mode of cultural understanding not only across national boundaries but also across class and ideological divisions. Neal Wood summarizes this transition in the new generation of the British intellectuals in the 1930s, Auden and Isherwood included, by suggesting that they "found in communism a ready-made instrument of action to be wielded in their nihilistic attack upon bourgeois values" (111), which distinguishes them from the earlier generation of British intellectuals in the 20s who "found an outlet for their disillusion in individualism and aestheticism" (99).⁷²

This authorial denial of the universal proclamation of an elitist and highbrow definition of culture announces Auden and Isherwood's alignment with Smedley in investigating the role of the intellectual with a class consciousness. This alignment in identifying the left-wing culture as a resistance to capitalism is most manifest when Auden and Isherwood sympathize with Smedley in critiquing the Nationalist government's censorship of the left-wing and communist culture in China:

⁷² Neal Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals*, especially Part II: Ideas, IV: "escape from the wasteland", 95-120.

In the evening Miss Smedley came round to see us at the Consulate, deeply depressed. The Police have just raided the bookshops in Hankow and Chungking, and confiscated large quantities of Left-wing and Communist literature. Even General Feng Yu-Hsiang's poems have been banned, because he writes about the poor. It is difficult to tell just who gave the order for this police action; probably one of Chiang's more reactionary advisers. It may not mean very much, but it is disheartening. It shows that there are still people in the Government who can't forget the old feuds. (Auden 168)

This textual representation of Smedley sheds some light upon the political connotations of Smedley's earlier reinterpretation of Chin Shih Hwang Ti's burning of books in *China Fights Back*. The ostensibly paradoxical attitude towards the two cases of book censorship speaks more of Smedley's consistent rather than confused political stance. It indicates that the united front policy under the political emergency to combat Japanese invasion does not eliminate the old domestic ideological and class struggle. The parable of a Communist leadership encoded in Smedley's reinterpretation of Chin Shih Hwang Ti unmistakably points to the construction of "culture" as being left-wing and communist. Its combat against either the Nationalist capitalism or the feudal Confucian aristocracy registers an orthodox Marxist historiography.

Auden and Isherwood sympathize rather than identify themselves with Smedley and the Chinese Communists. Auden's categorization of the Chin Shih Hwang Ti as a symbol of universal dictatorship indicates his different method of history writing from Smedley's.⁷³ They envision Communism as part of the resistance to both global fascism and domestic capitalism as the political dissent, but

⁷³ *Journey to a War*, 296.

do not carry so far as to imagine the establishment of a Communist regime modeled after the Soviet Union. Kerr investigates the problem of Smedley's Communist historiography by arguing that her propaganda motive "guides the pen and dehumanizes both the characters and the narrative which speaks for them (...) Smedley's Communist discourse comes close to Fascism at such moments — as it does elsewhere, in her rhetoric of blood and earth" (170). Auden and Isherwood's alternative history writing simultaneously detaches them from both the capitalist Nationalist regime and a Communist dictatorship of the proletariat. This distaste for any form of dictatorship puts them into the same category as George Orwell, who had more manifestly expressed his disquiet about the Soviet dictatorship in *Homage to Catalonia* (1938).

In his 1939 book review of *Journey to a War*,⁷⁴ Randall Swingler, member of the Great Britain Communist Party and the last editor of the *Left Review* (1934-1938), identifies Auden and Isherwood's detachment from both sides of the Chinese politics as their "feeling of being left out" (7). Seeing the war reporter's responsibility as either to report what is happening or to participate in the war, Swinger disapprovingly explains this feeling as the two authors' too much preoccupation with "their own psychological plight to be anything but helplessly lost in the struggle of modern China" (7). As a consequence, "the routine questions" they always asked leave Swingler the impression that "the authors are playing: playing at being war correspondents, at being Englishmen, at being poets" (7). Contemporary criticism of *Journey to a War* as an example of the early-twentieth-century Western travel writing either agrees with Swingler in dismissing Auden and Isherwood's playfulness as a

⁷⁴ See Randall Swingler on "Being Uninvolved, Two Intellectuals in China," *Daily Worker*, 29 March 1939, 7.

failure to respond to modernity,⁷⁵ or argues that the deliberate play with style and genre itself is their modernist response.⁷⁶ Swingler's review allows us to examine the text historically against the British left's conception of modernity. The psychological plight is not so much of Auden and Isherwood's inability to understand modern China, as it is of an alternative way in response to modernity. Under such circumstances, what were the routine questions, why they asked them, and whom they asked all become relevant, in the sense that these approaches to understanding the Chinese issues encode a political and ethical sentiment that not only connects to the home institution that employs them but also defines their geographical trajectory and their methods of representing Chinese subjects.

In *Journey to a War*, the Chinese Communist Party is simultaneously present and absent. It is present rhetorically in the text in the form of the routine questions the two authors ask. In Canton and Hankow, they care about how people of different political and religious persuasions think about the role the Chinese Communist Party plays in the war: their interviewees include the Nationalist government's leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang, the Communist leaders in Hankow Chou En-lai and Po ku, the American journalist Agnes Smedley, and British and American missionaries, etc. This rhetorical presence of the Communist Party at the same time means a lack of firsthand contact with the Communists, whose military activities were mainly based in Northwestern China. When asked by Po Ku in Hankow whether they were thinking of visiting the Eighth Route Army in the Northwestern front, Auden and Isherwood's answer was "No--so many journalists have been up there already, and written about it so well. Besides, the journey requires more time

⁷⁵ Nicholas Clifford, *"A Truthful Impression of the Country": British and American Travel Writing in China, 1880-1949*, 150-6.

⁷⁶ Stacy Burton. *Travel Narrative and the Ends of Modernity*, 21; see also Moynagh and Bryant.

than we could possibly allow” (Auden 61).

The two were originally commissioned in 1937 by Faber and Faber in London and Random House in New York to write a travel book about the East.⁷⁷ The reason of their choice of China was a mixture of China’s exotic appeal and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War because “mere sightseeing seemed dilettante and escapist in the crisis atmosphere of the late thirties.”⁷⁸ They decided to have a war of their own in China, escaping Hemingway and Malraux’s influence in representing the Spanish Civil War as literary observers. The reason they gave to Po Ku explaining why they did not go to the Northwestern Communist front reveals a similar anxiety of influence of real journalists such as Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley in representing the Communist Party. They confined their activities within the government-controlled territory. Neither the Nationalist nor the Communist front is visited and represented. Nevertheless, their “literary” observation of the non-front hinterland represents one aspect of war that is different from the masculine, military, patriarchal and patriotic front. Auden redefines war as such:

War is bombing an already disused arsenal, missing it, and killing a few old women. War is lying in a stable with a gangrenous leg. War is drinking hot water in a barn and worrying about one’s wife. War is a handful of lost and terrified men in the mountains, shooting at something moving in the undergrowth. War is waiting for days with nothing to do; shouting down a dead telephone; going without sleep, or sex, or a wash. War is untidy, inefficient, obscure, and largely a matter of chance. (202)

War is far from being merely the military front. War is the psychological

⁷⁷ *Journey to a War*, 13; *Christopher and His Kind*, 288-9.

⁷⁸ Isherwood, *Christopher and His Kind*, 288.

plight of ordinary people. War is a metaphor for the authors' critique of the rationality of modernity. Auden and Isherwood represent the Communist Party in a similar metaphorical manner. The latter's textual presence marks the importance of communism to the British left's political and social imagination in the 1930s. It constitutes the authors' rhetorical strategy to challenge capitalism and imperialism. Nevertheless, the absence of the Communist Northwestern front confines their imagining of communism as a literary metaphor and as an ethical stance. It also indicates a method of history writing that distinguishes them from Smedley and her orthodox Marxist historiography, which more often than not repeats the linear and progressive history writing of modernity. In the treatment of the Japanese captives, for example, Smedley represents a working-class Japanese captive, the diary he keeps, the Chinese translation of the diary, the Chinese reinterpretation of his speech, and the communist leaders' propaganda motive perfectly in unison to demonstrate the necessity for a permanent revolution of working class of all nations against capitalist fascism.⁷⁹ Smedley's representation of the Sino-Japanese War fits into the British Communist and left's demand for establishing the popular front, partly in response to the Comintern decision in 1935 for national communist parties' alliance with other progressive parties to build popular front.⁸⁰ In *Journey to a War*, Auden and Isherwood's refusal to endow too heavy an ideological burden upon the silenced body or the Japanese captive illustrates their deviation from the Orthodox Communist political stance and historiography.

⁷⁹ Smedley, *China Fights Back*, 164-70.

⁸⁰ For the study of the Great Britain Communist Party, see James Klugmann, "The Crisis of the Thirties: A Review of the Left," in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties*, 13-36; for the discussion of the British left in general, see Ben Pimlott, *Labour and the Left in the 1930s*, esp. Chapter 15 on the Popular Front, 143-54.

Alternative History and History Writing: *Journey to a War's* Class Rhetoric

As has been argued in previous sections, the different ways in which Auden/Isherwood, Smedley and Fleming reinterpret their Chinese informants' narrative or cope with the problem of translation indicates a division in their respective political sympathies, which in essence is an ethical issue that also concerns the concept of history and history writing: Who writes history? Whose history? Fleming and Smedley's contrasting history writing and their narrative consistency constitute two grand history narratives of their respective political persuasions. In comparison, *Journey to a War's* query of historical truth renders grand narratives relative and unreliable:

History, grown weary of Shanghai, bored with Barcelona, has fixed her capricious interest upon Hankow. But where is she staying? Everybody boasts that he has met her, but nobody can exactly say. Shall we find her at the big hotel, drinking whisky with the journalists in the bar? Is she guest of the Generalissimo, or the Soviet Ambassador? Does she prefer the headquarters of the Eighth Route Army, or the German military advisers? Is she content with a rickshaw coolie's hut? (Auden 50-1)

The "variety of the dramatis personae and multiple viewpoints" of Auden and Isherwood's "History" breaks the mirage of History as "unified authoritative narrative" (Haughton 152). In *Journey to a War*, Auden and Isherwood quote Bishop Roots, the American bishop of Hankow, to illustrate the "I like to have a talk with newcomers, before any one else gets hold of them" (Auden 52). Therefore, Isherwood's self-claim of not being able to decipher History himself should not be taken literally. This deconstruction of grand history narratives simultaneously registers the two authors' own concept of history. They are also consciously aware of

the importance of the ideological struggle for the interpretation of history, just as the quotation from bishop Roots indicates.

In *Journey to a War*, Auden and Isherwood's investigation into the concept of History draws their reader's attention from the rural setting back to the metropolitan centre. In a spatial as well as temporal sequence, they first understood the reality of wartime China as "a single, integrated scene" (32), situated both inside and outside of the foreign concession in Canton; then they searched for the presence of "History" among multiple subjects--foreign or Chinese, upper or lower class, left or right--living in Hankow, China's wartime capital; and finally in Shanghai before their departure for Japan, they realized the city's most brutal "visual statements of power-politics" (245) with its "gulf between society's two halves" (252)--between the foreign, the rich and the local, the poor. Here the depiction of the three metropolitan cities illuminates each other. History and reality, or the past and the present, combine in Shanghai into a scene of unbridgeable class division. This concept of history expressed in the form of travel narrative was endorsed theoretically two years later in 1940, when Walter Benjamin, in his "Theses on the Philosophy of History", articulates that class struggle "call[s] in question every victory, past and present, of the rulers" and makes the continuum of the history of the rulers explode.⁸¹

When Auden refers to the Russian aristocrats living in Hankow by saying that their clocks "stopped in 1917. It has been tea-time ever since" (Auden 50), he invokes the powerful image of the clock as a symbolic and revolutionary terminator of the old world. The image reappears in Isherwood's description of Shanghai. The transition from the historical Russian Revolution to contemporary Shanghai and China thus acquires a stronger sense of the present and the now with Shanghai's

⁸¹ Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illumination*, 246.

brutal presentation of power politics:

In this city--conquered, yet unoccupied by its conquerors--the mechanism of the old life is still ticking, but seems doomed to stop, like a watch dropped in the desert. In this city the gulf between society's two halves is too grossly wide for any bridge. There can be no compromise here. (252)

The image of the clock connects China in 1938 to the Russian Revolution in 1917. Nevertheless, the latter's political radicalism does not find its counterpart in Auden and Isherwood's solution to Shanghai's class division. This distinguishes them from Benjamin's similar evocation of the image of the clock with its symbolic meaning in the revolutionary tradition in Europe as a resistance to German fascism or to the social democratic norm with its reformist compromise. For Benjamin, the broken clock marks the crystallization of class struggle in the form of revolution, which introduces a new calendar and a historical consciousness.⁸² The seemingly radical representation of the class division in Shanghai in *Journey to a War*, even though repeating Benjamin's rhetoric of class confrontation, does not lead to a similar conclusion that implies a radical proletarian revolution.

Auden and Isherwood make this radical exposure of Shanghai's class division through the sharp contrast between its foreign presence and the Chinese lower classes. This last chapter of Isherwood's *Travel-Diary* about Shanghai substitutes a sociological representation of Shanghai's lower classes for their usual individual and personal perspective. They base their sociological study on the New Zealander Rewi Alley, who was working with the Nationalist government for the establishment of an Industrial Cooperative to resist Japan.⁸³ Auden and Isherwood

⁸² Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illumination*, 253.

⁸³ For the study of Rewi Alley, see Anne-Marie Brady, "West Meets East: Rewi Alley and Changing Attitudes towards Homosexuality in China," 97-120.

provide an economic rather than a political framework to explain the class struggle between Japanese fascism (together with the Western imperialist legacy) and the miserable Chinese lower classes. Seeing Japan's motive of invading China as an exclusively economic colonization, they propose a solution to lower-class poverty through government-led industrial development, which simultaneously serves to resist Japan's economic invasion.⁸⁴ This substitution of the economic progress for the political emancipation of the working class would have suited what Benjamin calls as a vulgar-Marxist conformism or to what Terry Eagleton names as reformist mythology.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, what is important here is the rhetoric about the working class. As Terry Eagleton comments on Benjamin, even though Benjamin calls for a working-class revolution that is idealist in the sense that "between the coming of the masses and the coming of the Messiah, no third term is able to crystalize. The revolutionary prophet substitutes himself for the revolutionary party, able to fulfill its mnemonic but not its theoretical and organizational tasks, rich in wisdom partly poor in practice" (177).

Smedley represents class division in the relationship between the Communist leadership and the masses. She constructs the Party's moral superiority as the justification for its leadership and mass support. Auden and Isherwood's imagination of the salvation of the oppressed entrusts power to the Nationalist government rather than the working class itself or the Communist Party. *Journey to a War* includes coolies and the Communist Party as historical subjects. But this juxtaposition simultaneously separates the one from the other without envisioning a plausible combination of them. Even though Auden writes that:

⁸⁴ *Journey to a War*, 251-2.

⁸⁵ See respectively Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History", in *Illumination*, 251; and Terry Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or towards a Revolutionary Criticism*, 179.

As now I hear it, rising round me from Shanghai,
 And mingling with the distant mutter of guerrilla
 Fighting,
 The voice of Man... (Auden 300)

The class struggle of the poor in Shanghai and the Communist fighting in Northwestern China is connected only by the common resistance to fascism for the general humanity. The economic nationalism here justifies the Nationalist government's political nationalism against Japan. Neither the Communist Party nor the working class constitutes a revolutionary force by itself. This political passivity of the working class resembles Smedley's class rhetoric. This class rhetoric renders class as a "moral rather than a social signifier" (Samuel 171). To a certain extent, Smedley's rhetoric recalls what Stephen Ingle terms as Britain's "scientific socialism", which is exemplified by Fabian socialism with its elitist and totalitarian tendency.⁸⁶ Auden and Isherwood's vision to solve lower-class poverty by depending on the Nationalist (capitalist) government's economic means also echoes the top-down solution of class problems.

Conclusion

The 1930s is the era of anti-fascism. European and American intellectual "fellow-travellers" in China may have different political persuasions, but their common sympathy towards the establishment of an anti-Japanese alliance between different Chinese political forces indicates the international scope of the anti-fascist alliance. Representations of Chinese politics and the Far Eastern problems reflect the mobilization of and by Western intellectuals for the cause of peace. In the European

⁸⁶ Stephen Ingle, *Narratives of British Socialism*, chapter 3, "Power to the People", 39-62.

context, communist parties' avant-garde position in resisting fascism drew much attention from Marxist and non-Marxist intellectuals alike. They were united not only by the need to combat fascism, but more importantly under the tradition of "the French Revolution, of reason, science, progress and humanist values" during a time of capitalist crisis (Hobsbawm 300). To these Western fellow-travellers, the Chinese Communist Party was a manifestation of such a tradition and represented possibilities of an international alliance between Europe and China in time of war. This effort to seek for transnational cultural equivalence associates them with their cultural predecessors in the 1910s and 1920s, who turn to Chinese tradition for cultural resources.

Western intellectual travellers to China, however, were not the only cultural agents who translated China to the West. British (leftist) journals, such as the *Left Review*, invited Chinese writers to introduce the Chinese condition to their British readers. Chinese voices were heard, although reframed by specific British cultural institutions. The 1935 Chinese Exhibition in London, by presenting aesthetic Chinese materials, constitutes China's national policy for cultural diplomacy. It means that Britain in the 1930s provided multiple avenues for the self-expression of China by the Chinese, in the form of co-authorship with the British. In the next chapter, I examine the importance of the Chinese cultural translator in introducing China to Britain in the 1930s. The Chinese agent represents a reversed route of travel from China to Britain. Close-reading Shih-I Hsiung's translation of traditional Chinese drama and his writings on the modern history of the East-West encounter, the next chapter aims to explore the ideological connotations of aesthetic choices by the Chinese writer in his cultural dislocation.

Chapter Three: Shih-I Hsiung and *Lady Precious Stream* (1934): Self-representation of China in Britain

It was with great difficulty that Ta Tung made them understand that foreigners, like Chinese, are reasonable human beings who, at worst, have their own peculiar customs and traditions. But their strange appearance and queer ways of life made the ignorant sceptical.

--Shih-I Hsiung, *The Bridge of Heaven* (167)

Thus wrote Shih-I Hsiung in his 1943 English novel *The Bridge of Heaven*. Through the novel's protagonist Ta Tung's Chinese perspective, Hsiung recounts the widespread prejudices in China against foreigners (here in the novel particularly refers to Westerners, or Britons) and the Chinese intellectuals' effort in intercultural communication to eliminate such prejudices. However, this effort does not suggest an all-embracing attitude towards the West. By contrast, the novel's representation of the Westerners distinguishes missionaries and headmasters of missionary schools from Western doctors and nurses in China, critiquing the former for inheriting the imperialist legacy and for their superiority mindset. In presenting the history of late Qing China and depicting Britons in China as different Chinese see them, this novel served as an mirror image for its English-reading public to look at the self from the perspectives of their Chinese other. In the meantime, by writing a novel full of all kinds of Chinese characters, Hsiung intended to challenge stereotypes of China and the Chinese in Anglo-American theatres and films. Talking about his production of *Lady Precious Stream* (1934), an adaptation from a traditional Chinese drama,

Hsiung thus explains:

It is a pity that so few of our plays were brought over here. For a play in which all the characters, good or bad, are Chinese will at least show the audience that there are as many good people in proportion in China as in any other country. Any dramatist would realize that it is impossible to write a play in which all the men are like Fu Manchu and all the women like Amah!”

(Afterthought 187)

Hsiung acted as such a cultural translator between China and the West in the real world as Ta Tung does in Hsiung’s fictional world. What the contemporary Chinese American writer Ha Jin defines Yutang Lin in the American context may well explain Hsiung’s role as cultural translator in the British context. In his search of the literary traditions for diasporic Chinese writers, Ha Jin depicts Lin as a “cultural ambassador” who “spoke to the West about China and to the Chinese about the West. He functioned as a bridge—a link between two countries, two languages, and two cultures. In essence, he viewed himself as a cultural spokesman of China” (120). Nevertheless, Ha Jin is suspicious of Lin’s role due to Lin’s “dependency on China for his literary existence” (120). His uneasiness derives from his critical attitude towards “China” that refers to Communist China’s state power, specifically represented by the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989. However, Ha Jin’s construction of contemporary diasporic Chinese identity tends to undermine the historical context of the 1930s in which Chinese writers like Hsiung and Lin practiced their role as cultural translator. The assumption that the cultural ambassador may function as part of the state ideological apparatus tends to undermine the cultural translator’s subjectivity and ignore the cultural and social mechanism behind their literary representation. Examining Hsiung’s literary

representations of China and the Chinese in English historically in the 1930s and 1940s requires us to ask a series of questions: why did he speak to the Chinese about the West? Why did he speak to the West about China? Why did he choose to adapt a traditional Chinese drama into English? Why did he engage himself in the genre of traditional Chinese drama and (Western) spoken drama? What were the cultural traditions and resources for him in both the British and the Chinese contexts? How did he engage with these traditions? How did his engagement with them speak of his cultural response to China and the Anglo-Chinese relations in the 1930s? Which China? What Chinese identity?

Relating to this choice between Western and non-Western traditions for diasporic writers, Salman Rushdie queries “What are the consequences, both spiritual and practical, of refusing to make any concessions to Western ideas and practices? What are the consequences of embracing those ideas and practices and turning away from the ones that came here with us?” (432) To Rushdie, his literary models come both from his Indian tradition and from the tradition of diasporic writing in the West. They suggest the mode of diasporic identity making that celebrates cultural hybridity which simultaneously avoids culturalism and guards against cultural assimilation. In a similar vein, in our reconstruction of Hsiung as a diasporic Chinese in Britain, we should historically examine ways in which he engaged with various British traditions of representing China and the Chinese. This chapter argues that these traditions are themselves results of cultural appropriation and hybridity that historically established imaginary connections between the West and China. Hsiung’s adaptation of Chinese theatre on the Anglo-American stage, while drawing upon Western traditions of appropriating Chinese drama, simultaneously attempted to compete with the implied cultural orientalism for the

authority to define Chineseness. In addition, as Susan Friedman and James Clifford have argued, who constructs the diasporic identity and for whom are also crucial questions since diasporic communities are also divided by class and gender.⁸⁷ Literary and intellectual constructions of diasporic identity reveals its elitist nature. My reading of Hsiung aims to specify the class and gender dimension in his imagination of China. Reexamining Hsiung as cultural translator requires us to think of the West and China as non-essential entities and concepts. It also encourages us to explore connotations of the transnational approach in cross-cultural encounters.

Publication and Performance of *LPS*: a Case of Co-authorship

Sheng Shuang defines *LPS* as a “bastardized version of Peking Opera” because “without any singing parts or orchestra, the play blurs the boundary between Chinese theatre and Western theatre, also known as the spoken drama in the Chinese context” (87). This definition situates the play in two theatrical traditions, but they are both traditions in their global circulation: Chinese theatre in the West and Western theatre as Chinese spoken drama. What happened to Peking Opera when it traveled to the West? What were the specific features Western appropriations tried to highlight? Under what circumstances did Western theatre transform into Chinese spoken drama? What were the cultural mechanism and ideological background for both cases? The bastardization of these literary and cultural forms indicates that translation played a crucial role in their global circulation, and these translations were often creative rather than loyal and literal, revealing the cultural appropriations that generate significance for specific local contexts. The development of Chinese spoken via translating Western theatre in the early twentieth century is relevant to my

⁸⁷ See Susan Friedman, “Migrations, Diasporas, and Borders,” 272; and James Clifford, “Diasporas,” 312-3.

discussion of Hsiung and *LPS* because Hsiung was an active participator in the translation of this literary form from the West to China. Before leaving for England in 1931, he had been translating James Barrie and Bernard Shaw's plays into Chinese and had them published in the important literary journal *Fiction Monthly* in China. The thematic and ideological connections between Hsiung as a translator of British plays in China and as a presenter of Chinese theatre in Britain are what this chapter tries to demonstrate. But before moving on to this examination of the Chinese context in later sections of this chapter, the current section will mainly focus on situating *LPS* within Chinese theatre's westward journey to Britain and within the tradition of its appropriation on the historical London (and American) stage.

Sheng Shuang locates *LPS* within the tradition of Western appropriation of Peking Opera form. She insists that the Western construction of Peking Opera as an anti-realist and symbolic form both in theory (as by Brecht, for example, in his 1936 essay "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting") and in practice (as represented by the two Americans Hazelton and Benrimo's *The Yellow Jacket*, which premiered in London in 1913) usually borders between experimental creativity and some form of exoticization of modernist Orientalism.⁸⁸ They are not essentially different in perpetuating certain notions of Chineseness and claiming a Western discursive authority over "China".⁸⁹ What, then, was *LPS*'s relationship to this Western discursive authority as a self-representation of China? How did Western appropriations interpret symbolism in stage practice (stage setting, property man, decoration, costumes and makeup, etc.)? How did Hsiung re-appropriate the discourse of symbolism to frame *LPS*? And why? My close reading of *LPS* aims to

⁸⁸ Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," 91-99.

⁸⁹ Shen Shuang, "S. I. Hsiung's *Lady Precious Stream* and the Global Circulation of Peking Opera Form as a Modernist Form," 85.

demonstrate that, on the one hand, *LPS* was situated in more than one discursive environment about traditional Chinese culture and these discourses often entangled with each other. For example, the label of symbolism was attached not only to Chinese theatre but also to poetry, whereas fascination for traditional Chinese costumes were often associated with a broader and more popular fancy for Chinese material culture, such as porcelain. On the other hand, Hsiung's relations to these traditions were interactive rather than totally radical or passive.

In his 1935 book review of *LPS* in the *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, an English journal published in Shanghai and edited by Chinese intellectuals with a cosmopolitan outlook, Yutang Lin claims that the success of *LPS* results from “fifteen per cent. Mr. Hsiung, and eighty-five per cent. literal translation” (108). He credits Hsiung's liberal translation for its “apt and happy manner of making things clear to an English audience” (108) by letting his Chinese protagonists adopt “typically English” tones of British aristocrats in the marriage plot. In the meantime, Lin insists that he would not allow Hsiung such liberty in translating another traditional Chinese play *The Story of the Western Chamber*, which, being a literary masterpiece, distinguishes itself from *LPS* as a commercial melodrama. Lin's discussion of the role of the translator is confined to the linguistic level, and his insistence on the translation's faithfulness prioritizes the original text and context. Nevertheless, the success and popularity of *LPS* and the obscurity of the *Western Chamber*, the latter of which Hsiung more faithfully translated into English in 1936, suggest that the standard for what was classic and what was popular in Chinese drama changed in this form's circulation from China to Britain. How Chinese drama was produced, circulated and received in the British context reveals a different cultural mechanism and power dynamics, in which *LPS*'s text and its equally

important performance were situated.

Lady (Dorothea) Hosie, daughter of the sinologist W. E. Soothill and herself a writer on China, had a different opinion on the role of the translator for *LPS*, if not on the translation itself. In her *Guardian* review of the play in 1934, she argues that “Surely, too, an English hand has collaborated in the excellent colloquial English which makes the play as readable as any novel. On consideration, it appears that two intelligences, English and Chinese, ought to be in close touch to make any perfect interpretation: does it not?” (4) While Lady Hosie credits the translation, as Lin does, she simultaneously denies Hsiung’s capability of writing “excellent colloquial English” (4). This creation of an imaginary English co-author downgrades Hsiung’s sole authorship of the text and helps Lady Hosie claim interpretative authority over things Chinese. Lady Hosie’s book review indicates that the global circulation and reception of texts involve discursive confrontations over identity, authenticity and authority. However, in my reading of Hsiung in this chapter and in my definition of *LPS* as a product of “co-authorship”, I do not mean the denial of the Chinese translator’s subjectivity on the linguistic level. Instead, I intend to examine the case of co-authorship on a broader discursive level about both the publication and production of *LPS*. I aim to illustrate how Hsiung and his British collaborators worked together to translate Chinese theatre into English and how their joint translation encoded their respective cultural imagination against the particular historical context in Britain and China (in their real and imaginary relations).

The publication and stage production of *LPS* in London were a joint effort by Hsiung and a group of British men of letters. Hsiung invited established British writers, including the poet and literary critic Lascelles Abercrombie (1881-1938), the novelist and playwright John Boynton Priestley (1894-1984), the poet and

playwright Gordon Bottomley (1874-1948), and the playwright Lord Dunsany (1878-1957) to write prefaces for his English plays. In addition, Hsiung cooperated with the British actress Nancy Price and her People's National Theatre to move the play onto London's stage. To promote the play, Price had a series of articles on various Chinese art forms published in the magazine she edited, the *People's National Theatre Magazine*. These paratexts, which to a large extent helped to regulate the popular reception of the play among the general public, invariably stress on the aesthetic aspect of Chinese culture and incorporate *LPS* into the British tradition of the chinoiserie fashion. The relationship of *LPS* to these paratexts illustrates the case of co-authorship. In the Western tradition of representing the other, especially in travel writing, co-authorship usually takes the form of the Western writers' occupation of their local interlocutor's subjectivity. Lydia Liu defines a different form of co-authorship that highlights the subjectivity of the Chinese and their creative reception and re-appropriation of Western ideas in the context of modern China. Hsiung's case demonstrates yet another form of co-authorship: that a Chinese writer makes self-representation to a British audience and participates in the British production of the China discourse. This chapter argues that the relations between *LPS* and its paratexts registered a field of complex power dynamics, in which cooperation and contention co-existed. It examines ways in which *LPS*'s Western co-authors interpreted the text or presented it on stage, and asks how their appropriation of Chinese culture reflects their cultural response to the early-twentieth-century reality. It similarly questions the nature of Hsiung's reliance on these Western paratexts and how they facilitated or suppressed Hsiung's own voice.

Texts and Prefaces: *LPS* as Modernist chinoiserie

In his preface to *LPS*, first published in London by Methuen, in 1934, Abercrombie depicts the world which the play creates as “magic”, “romance”, “spell”, and “secret”. More specifically, he describes one scene from Act One, in which the Wang family gather in the garden to enjoy the snow, as showing “a profoundly human reality” (ix). Identifying it as a manifestation of China’s aesthetic culture, Abercrombie concludes that “aesthetic culture is the measure of civilization” (ix). Priestley employs a similar rhetoric to emphasize the aesthetic quality of traditional Chinese culture in his preface to the novel adaptation of *LPS: The Story of Lady Precious Stream* (1950). He contends that “His [Shih-I Hsiung’s] *Lady Precious Stream* takes its place with the paintings, drawings, pottery, poems and wise anecdotes... which give us so many enchanting glimpses of remote old China” (7). Both Abercrombie and Priestley recall the image of old Cathay in the long tradition of the willow-pattern plate narrative, a form of British chinoiserie with “an often devalued decorative motif and style (...) an idealized notion of a timeless China on the blue willow plate (...) a historical dimension ignored in the hyper-reality of chinoiserie” (Laurence 37). Nevertheless, their trope of a “timeless China” differs from the eighteenth and nineteenth-century discursive construction around the willow-pattern plate narrative. When the nineteenth-century version follows political economy’s logic to construct China as a “primitive and static” alien culture in contrast to the “civilized and progressive” self,⁹⁰ the twentieth-century one witnesses a transition to what David Porter defines as “modernist chinoiserie”, which “is steeped in a civilizational nostalgia that colours its whimsical flights of fancy with a

⁹⁰ For the discussion about the ideological construction around the willow pattern plate in the 19th century, see O’Hara’s “‘The Willow Pattern That We Knew’: The Victorian Literature of Blue Willow” and Forman’s *China and the Victorian Imagination: Empires Entwined*, particularly chapter 5 “Staging the Celestial”, 161-192.

palpable sense of longing and a pronounced ambivalence towards the triumphs of modernity” (19). In other words, modernist chinoiserie incorporates ways in which British modernist intellectuals responded to modernization and modernity. Abercrombie and Priestley’s praise for the Chinese aesthetic culture expresses their discontent with the social and political life in Britain in the 1930s and 1940s. Abercrombie’s passion for aesthetic culture represents his adherence to the British tradition of individual talents in order to resist materialism and the totalitarian tendency of socialism.⁹¹ Priestley expresses this dissatisfaction more openly when he reiterates in his preface what he has expressed in his book *Delight*, published a year earlier in 1949. Priestley’s nostalgia for ancient China encodes the British leftist and oppositional stance in the late 1940s against both capitalism and communism. As Priestley says:

I do not want an up-to-date China on either the American or Russian plan. The world seems so much poorer now that the fantastic old Empire has gone like smoke... and now that there is merely another vast Asiatic country filled with people clamouring for cigarettes and canned goods (*Delight* 198).

This fancy for traditional Chinese culture as literary reality is better illustrated by the British writer of fantasy Lord Dunsany in his preface to *The Professor from Peking* (1939), Hsiung’s play on modern Chinese politics between the two World Wars. Lord Dunsany claims that he found a perfect harmony between fancy and realism in *LPS*, whose poetic representation of China opens up the ancient civilization realistically as the “land of dragons, peach-trees, peonies, and plum-blossoms, with its ages and ages of culture, slowly storing its dreams in green jade, porcelain, and gold” (viii). Whereas by contrast, he acknowledges his confusion about the modern China which

⁹¹ Fisher, “Lascelles Abercrombie: A Biographical Essay,” 28-49.

Hsiung's new play tries to represent, and regrets for a China that is "unfortunately" and disharmoniously complicated "by telephones, bombs, and Communism" (viii). In Lord Dunsany's case, traditional Orientalism's "evocation of a textual aesthetics of exoticism" functions as non-traditional Orientalism which invites readers "to reflect on such issues as how social narratives about the cultural other are constructed and deployed, and how the perspective of the cultural other may inform us about our own way of life" (Thomas 85). To Abercrombie, Priestley, and Lord Dunsany, the aesthetic Chinese culture facilitate them to construct a modernist utopia that in essence is no different from Dickinson's imagination of China as a Confucian and moral ideal (as has been discussed in the introduction). Modernist chinoiserie as was evoked by the publication of *LPS*, be it aesthetic, philosophical, or ethical, references an intellectual disquiet about capitalist modernization and the global expansion of its materialism and ideology in the early-twentieth-century Britain.

Besides textual aesthetics, chinoiserie also takes a material form in its appropriation of Chinese theatre. It includes costumes, make-up, stage setting and decoration, etc. In the Western appropriation of Chinese theatre as symbolism, these material forms "realistically" reference authenticity of Chineseness. The elite and intellectual interests was combined with popular desire for the exotic to make *LPS* a desirable high-brow culture for middle-class consumption. In Hsiung's preparation to move onto stage the second traditional Chinese play he translated in 1936 into English, namely *The Story of the Western Chamber*, "a most expensive set of costumes for the play was already made" in China (Hsiung, Afterthought 183). Hsiung's emphasis on the value and origin of the costumes provided him with elements of "authenticity" to support his authority over Chineseness in Britain. Because it was exactly the costumes for the performance of *LPS* that were once

challenged as being inauthentic by J. O. P. Bland, a British writer and journalist who lived in China between 1883 and 1910 and published a series of books on China. Hsiung thus recounts his brief meeting with Bland in an evening in the interval of one performance of *LPS*:

He did not answer me in Chinese, but turned to say in English that some of the dresses were Japanese, at least, he had noticed they wore such garments in Japan! I dared not to put any questions to him, but told him that most of the costumes were kindly loaned by Sir James and Lady Lockhart, Mr. W. P. Kerr, and Professor Eileen Power, who had brought them from China themselves. I went further to confess that they were hopelessly of the wrong period, but were unquestionably genuine. He pooh-poohed my words and went off to enjoy the latter half of the performance and the interview came to an end without any apparent success. (171)

Costumes thus became another point of authenticity and another space for discursive confrontation. Bland's mistaking of Chinese costumes for Japanese ones indicates that in popular imagination, Chinese and Japanese culture and cultural materials were often interchangeably received in Britain under the generalization of the Oriental, due to popular theatrical reinvention of them. For example, the American production of *The Yellow Jacket* (1913) borrowed from Chinese theatre, and Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera *The Mikado* in 1885 creatively reinvented Japanese theatre. Both were a display of "Oriental" costumes. Hsiung felt insulted by Bland not only because the latter challenged Hsiung's authority on Chinese culture and his authenticity as a Chinese. Equally important is the fact that Bland's substitution of Japan for China in the cultural sense corresponded to Japan's invasion of China in mid-1930s in reality. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Hsiung's method

of resistance is put into question. Hsiung's insistence on having more expensive and "authentic" Chinese costumes did not help him correctly represent either the historical period in the play or modern China any more realistically. Highlighting the importance of costumes tends to repeat the same logic of racializing Chinese cultural materials, whose popular circulation perpetuates the image of China in the devalued chinoiserie fashion.

Theatre and Ideology: Nancy Price and Chinoiserie

With her stage production of *LPS*, Nancy Price successfully combined this elite vogue for chinoiserie fashion with its profitable appeal among the wider public by displaying a scholarly mastery over the costumes and stage decoration.⁹² Diana Yeh thus explains the nature of Price's production of *LPS* and Hsiung's relationship to this chinoiserie tradition:

The taste for chinoiserie was central to Price's crafting of Lady Precious Stream into "the greatest success". Paradoxically, for a modern experimental theatre, which used income generated from Lady Precious Stream to fund productions of the works of W. B. Yeats, its recourse to chinoiserie contradicted the non-naturalistic symbolism of the Chinese stage. By using things Chinese to authenticate its production, the People's National Theatre transformed Lady Precious Stream into a purportedly realistic representation of elite Chinese life as imagined via tales of Cathay. As such, the production was at odds with Hsiung's original intentions to present a modern national identity via "an old Chinese play". The ambivalence of the production accounts for the diverging viewpoints in the reception of the play, which

⁹² Yeh, "Staging China, Excising the Chinese: *Lady Precious Stream* and the Darker side of Chinoiserie", 184-5.

further points to the salience of chinoiserie constructions of China. (“Staging China” 186)

The “non-naturalistic symbolism” of the Chinese stage itself is a Western construction as part of the chinoiserie tradition. This symbolism does not contradict the “purportedly realistic representation” of China via costumes and make-up. Instead, they together demonstrate the combination between “elite chinoiserie and the populist vogue for China” and the plural form of “chinoiserie constructions of China” (195). Nor do we need to interpret the nature of the relationship between Nancy Price and Hsiung as Western chinoiserie’s suppression of Chinese voice of modernity. Because as Shen Shuang argues, “the tendency to counter Orientalism with claims about the ‘real’ China doesn’t work precisely because it reproduces the polarity of modernism vs. realism, an opposition that is already part and parcel of modernism as ideology” (85). Having understood when, where, and how chinoiserie constructions of *LPS* were made, we should further question why and by whom it were made. I argue that Price and Hsiung, as co-authors of *LPS*’s London production, respectively capitalized on chinoiserie tropes of China as their cultural response to the intertwined modern condition between Britain and China. The cooperation between Price and Hsiung also helps us understand the way in which transnational connection was historically made between Britain and China. It urges us to query the nature of this transnationalism in comparison to that established by Russell, Auden and Isherwood through their travel to China. This comparison reveals to us the plural form of transnationalism and their different methods in imagining cross-cultural solidarity and in defining the very notion of culture.

Price’s publicity strategy for *LPS* in chinoiserie fashion did successfully cater to the latter’s profitability in Britain. In the first several months since *LPS*’s premiere

in November 1934, Price had a series of articles on various aspects of traditional Chinese culture published in the *People's National Theatre Magazine* she edited. They include an article by Hsiung on Chinese theatre in which he reiterates the symbolic nature of the scenery and stage setting in traditional Chinese drama.⁹³ It demonstrates that Hsiung was an active and conscious co-author of this chinoiserie tradition. They also include the English translation (by multiple translators) of a group of Chinese poems.⁹⁴ The inclusion of Chinese poetry recalled the modernist construction of Chinese poetry after the First World War by such figures as Arthur Waley and Ezra Pound, who, according to Patricia Laurence, helped to create an alternative discourse on China other than the imperialist one, although both are equally ignorant of modern China.⁹⁵ There is also an article titled "A Brief Survey of Chinese Art". The author confines the scope of "Chinese art" to the material art of porcelain, pottery and jade, which only acquires their cultural significance after their circulation to Britain through the East India Company.⁹⁶ The author's appreciation of the chinaware dismisses the nineteenth-century imperialist ideological construction of chinoiserie or the willow pattern plate. Nevertheless, this artistic appreciation also reduces Chinese art to the material chinaware that only becomes visible and makes sense to the West through the colonial and commercial activities in history. The quaintness and value of the chinaware, together with the aesthetic and intellectual construction of Chinese poetry, helped Price to frame the play within the familiar tradition of chinoiserie for popular consumption. Price, "who was enterprising enough to gamble her last penny on it [*LPS*]" (Hsiung, Afterthought 167), was paid

⁹³ Shih-I Hsiung, "Some Conventions of the Chinese Stage," 3-5.

⁹⁴ "Poems from the Chinese," 6-11.

⁹⁵ Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe's Chinese Eyes*: 308.

⁹⁶ John Sparks, "A Brief Survey of Chinese Art," 9-12.

off by the play's commercial success to deal with the constant financial pressure to run the People's National Theatre.⁹⁷ Until August 1935, *LPS* had made 537 pounds 6 shillings and 1 penny for Price in less than one year, helping her to reduce the deficit of her theatre on the 1935 season to 79 pounds 14 shillings and 9 pence. In comparison, she had a more substantial deficit of 4881 pounds 4 shillings 11 pence two years earlier on the 1932-1933 season.⁹⁸

Price's elitist appropriation of the Chinese theatre is as ideological as it is formal and material. In her editorial in the very first issue of the *People's National Theatre Magazine* in 1933, Price insists on the role of theatre as propaganda to nourish national life and a diseased mind in a mechanized age. She thus explains the significance in her choice of "People's National" to name her theatre: the people are the controlling power, and the plays are representative of every class. Under this aegis, she criticizes the state-controlled BBC for not speaking for the people.⁹⁹ Price's production and publicity of *LPS* bear much ideological resemblance to Hsiung's British preface writers in constructing modernist chinoiserie as a response to problems of Britain's modern condition. However, with Price's undoubted criticism of Britain's state apparatus is her rather vague class rhetoric: what people and which class? How did her choice of non-British theatre illustrate her class rhetoric in its international dimension? How did her production and publicity of *LPS* speak of her strategy for establishing transnational connection?

LPS reflects Hsiung's elitist stance behind his class discourse and his imagination of the nation. Even though the theme of rising from poverty to power is

⁹⁷ Wearing, "Nancy Price and the People's National Theatre." 71-89.

⁹⁸ See *People's National Theatre Magazine*, 2. 7 (July/August 1935): 15.

⁹⁹ Price, "The Theatre," 7-9.

in the original plot, Hsiung's adaptation consciously reworks the plot and imitates the modern class rhetoric in the narrative. For example, when ordered to compose poems, the male protagonist Hsieh protests by asserting that "I must beg to point out to Your Excellency the fact that I am one of your laborers and my duty to Your Excellency is limited to labor.... If it is not my labor but my talent you want, then I must beg you to treat me as a gentleman; and I must be invited, not ordered" (Hsiung, *LPS* 20). The gentleman disguised as a laborer indicates an unstable border for class division. Hsieh's ascendance from a laborer to a king (due to his physical and literary ability) physically realizes this trespassing of the class border. However, Hsiung's depiction of Hsieh as a national allegory betrays the elite impersonation of the lower class and reveals the absence of real labor class in Hsiung's imagination of modern China's nation building. This elitist stance persists in all Hsiung's English works, including his play on modern China *The Professor from Peking* and his novel *The Bridge of Heaven*. In the former, an intellectual-turned minister becomes the symbol of national unity (between the governing Nationalist Party and the oppositional Communist Party) to resist Japan's invasion in 1937. The play was performed in the 1939 Malvern theatre festival and served as war propaganda to support the Nationalist government in China against Japan. In the latter, Hsiung has his male protagonist Ta Tung transform from the poorest class in village to the leader of China's 1911 Revolution. However, this formation of a modern Chinese nation-state derives from Ta Tung's removal of his lower-class origin and his acquisition of the literary and military knowledge required from a revolutionary leader. Representatives of modern China in Hsiung's works are unanimously intellectual and educated.

Hsiung was not unaware of the struggle for authority involved in the co-

authorship between Europeans and Chinese in producing books on China. In his wife Dymia Hsiung's autobiographical fiction *The Flowery Exile* (1952), which depicts the Hsiung family's life in Britain from the late 1930s onwards, Mr. Lo, who is modeled on Hsiung, complains about Chinese translators' difficulty in their cooperation with European writers to work on books about China:

I hear that to help Europeans to write books on Chinese subjects is quite easy in one way but most difficult in another... It is easy, because all they require you to do is to translate literally for them; they have to rewrite it in their own style in any case, otherwise it doesn't look like their work when printed. It is difficult, because they are not like students whom you could teach according to your method; and besides, they are bound to misunderstand you sometimes and then it seems tactless on your part to correct their schoolboy howlers. (65-66)

The publication and production of *LPS* demonstrate a similar case of co-authorship between the British and the Chinese, even though the relationship between Hsiung as the author and his British collaborators is slightly different from the case Mr. Lo describes. The heavy discursive investment in *LPS* changed this popular melodrama in its Chinese context into a cultural signifier of high literary and aesthetic quality in Britain. This co-authorship between Hsiung and his British collaborators demonstrates the process in which Chinese theatre lost its original standard for distinguishing between the classic and the commercial and gained its new cultural significance in its transnational circulation from China to Britain. As Yutang Lin argues in his review of *LPS*, *LPS* and *Western Chamber* in their Chinese context illustrate the distinction between melodrama and literary masterpiece and between the commercial and the literary, which manifests itself mainly in language and

literary quality. This distinction between the two plays was identified by Bernard Shaw and Gordon Bottomley, the former of whom compares the two plays by saying: “I liked the *Western Chamber* very much: far better than *Precious Stream*, which is a commonplace melodrama, whereas the *Western Chamber* is a delightful dramatic poem, like our very best medieval plays” (Hsiung, *Afterthought* 177). However, the commercial circulation and popular reception of the formal and material aspects of *LPS* as points of authenticity and highbrow culture blurs the original border between the commercial and the classic. The transformation of *LPS* from the “commercial” in the Chinese context to the “aesthetic” in Britain provided Hsiung the opportunity to re-appropriate the discourse of modernist chinoiserie to establish traditional Chinese culture as a symbol of modernity.

The Chinese ambassador to London Guo Tai-Chi provided both Hsiung and Price with the official justification for their respective authenticity claim. To promote *LPS*, Price invited Guo to write an article on the play for her magazine. In Guo’s article published in the February issue of 1935, he celebrates the success of *LPS* and the universality of art by claiming that:

I have enjoyed noting how we of the audience have given laughter or applause to the many points in the play that are oldest and most constant in the traditions of Chinese life and the Chinese theatre. What sounds most modern is really very old, and what a Chinese recognizes as deep set in Chinese habit is held by the English audience as native or delicious to English taste. Such comparison and collaboration reveals each nation to the other, and shows how East and West do meet. (1)

As an auto-ethnographic expression by a Chinese in the Anglo-American society, Hsiung’s effort implies an “antinationalist nationalism” in his method in constructing

his diasporic identity that offers him discursive “weapons of the (relatively) weak” (J. Clifford 307). In his talking about the formation of diasporic subjectivity, James Clifford has the Jewish model in mind when he explains this “prescriptive antinationalism” by arguing that “it is important to distinguish nationalist critical longing and nostalgic or eschatological visions, from actual nation building—with the help of armies, schools, police, and mass media” (307). Even though Hsiung’s nationalist and nostalgic longing registers China as a nation-state, the creation of a Minister of Foreign Affairs helps omit the military confrontations in the original plot and represents a cultural and diplomatic solution to international issues. Nevertheless, with the official justification by the Chinese ambassador to London, “modern China” acquires an official and privileged identity in association with the governing class. Hsiung’s elitist and Confucian imagination of the nation constructs China in a nationalist historiography that is closely aligned with the “KMT [Nationalist Party] quasi-Confucian representation of the nation” (Duara 11). Price had Hsiung’s morality play *Mencius Was a Bad Boy* serialized in the February and March issues of the *People’s National Theatre Magazine* in 1935. The play served to propagate the Confucian conception of good breeding and good manner.¹⁰⁰ This preaching for Confucianism echoed China’s Nationalist government’s ideological reconstruction of the Confucian tradition in its New Life Movement, a government-led cultural and moral reform starting in early 1934 and lasted until 1949. In his biography of China’s leader Chiang Kai-Shek published in 1948, Hsiung depicts the Movement as “a revival of an ancient tradition” with Confucian teaching as its rudiments (*Life of Chiang* 315). He defends the Movement and its preservation of the old virtues by arguing that “there were certain fundamentals which remained untouchable” (315).

¹⁰⁰ Shih-I Hsiung, “Mencius Was a Bad Boy,” *People’s National Theatre Magazine*, 2. 2 (February 1935): 3-8; 2.3 (March 1935): 24-26.

In *LPS*, Hsiung creates a Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs to bridge the cultural gap between the Western Regions and China. The textual Minister employs modern diplomatic methods in dealing with international relations. Ambassador Guo's justification for the "unexpected likeness" between Britain and China performed this cultural diplomacy in the real sense. However, it is worth noting that both in the textual and the real worlds, this likeness is not natural, but instead results from efforts on both sides of this collaboration.

This transnational connection between Hsiung and his British collaborators presents itself very differently from what Shen Shuang defines as "leftist internationalism" (88). As Western reviewers of *LPS* who had the privilege to compare the play with its original Peking Opera performance, Auden and Isherwood simply reduced the play to Western chinoiserie. The fact that Hsiung's effort to represent modern China in the chinoiserie tradition was not recognized by leftist writers like Auden and Isherwood suggests the latter's different method in constructing modernity and in establishing transnational solidarity. Auden and Isherwood discovered the realness of China not from the aesthetic ideal of traditional Chinese culture but from their travel in and witness of wartime China. They held a critical attitude towards the same New Life Movement. Regarding it as the ideological construction of the Nationalist government of China under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, Isherwood argues that:

The New Life Movement was therefore, according to this view, a direct attempt to compete with the Communist platform of economic and social reform, substituting a retreat to Confucius for an advance to Marx. In a sense Madame [Chiang] herself admitted this when she said: 'We are giving the people what the Communists promised but couldn't perform' (Auden 67)

Sympathetic with the Chinese Communists [in oppositional stance until 1949], Auden and Isherwood's rhetoric of the New Life Movement represents China in its ideological and class divergence that reflects their leftist stance in challenging the nationalist grand narrative in a cross-national context. By contrast, Hsiung's ideological conformity to this grand narrative, while helping him combat Western stereotypes of China and the Chinese within the historical unequal power relations between China and the West, omits its cultural hegemony in China. In other words, Hsiung's elitist stance guards against inequality left by the (semi-) colonial legacy without questioning how the homogenizing tendency of this same elitist position may perpetuate inequality in the domestic context in the form of class struggle. With what Frantz Fanon defines as "the pitfalls of national consciousness", the prescriptive nationalism against imperialism takes effect only partially.¹⁰¹

Price capitalized on the Chinese ambassador's presence to prove *LPS* as an authentic Chinese drama and to justify her aesthetic reconstruction of Chinese theatre in its formal and material aspects. Ideologically, her production of and publicity for this traditional Chinese drama reveals the elitist (or middle-class) origin of her class rhetoric. Price did not treat China's state discourse about traditional culture in an equally critical manner as she distinguished between state power and the people in the British context. As a consequence, her acceptance of Hsiung leaves the (Chinese) state power's legitimacy to speak for the people totally unexamined, which contradicts her very distinction between the state and the people. When Patricia Laurence examines the historical connection between the Bloomsbury Group in Britain and the Crescent Moon Group in China, she argues that it demonstrates a transnational literary exchange that enables a blurred boundary

¹⁰¹ Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 119-165.

between the self and the other, and implies a critical and oppositional stance against the dominant ideologies in both contexts: British imperialism and Chinese nationalism.¹⁰² In comparison, the alliance between Hsiung and his British collaborators in their appropriation of traditional Chinese culture establishes a transnational connection that is highly dependent on the “commercial value of indigenous Chinese culture in the global market” (Shen 96). This dependence renders their intended critique of power self-paradoxical.

***LPS* and *The Yellow Jacket* (1913): Authority and Authenticity of Chinese Theatre**

Paratexts about *LPS* reveal Hsiung’s willing invitation and acceptance of his British collaborators to appropriate Chinese poetry, aesthetics, and decorative items as proofs of authenticity and modernity. Examining this British enthusiasm for chinoiserie reignited in the early twentieth century, Ashley Thorpe argues that while the Chinese or East Asian design “was held in high regard as an inspirational source for new kinds of European self-expression, the cultural decontextualization of it in the service of Western modernity was also an act of cultural imperialism” (85). Hsiung’s intervention in this British tradition of representing China through the production of *LPS* helps us understand historically the gain and loss of translating Chinese cultural forms in Britain, and the various points of collaboration with and resistance to this cultural imperialism in the British context. In this section, I will look at the Anglo-American appropriation of traditional Chinese theatre in its stage presentation (the use of attendants and stage setting, etc.) as is exemplified by *The Yellow Jacket*, co-written by two Americans George Cochrane Hazelton and Joseph

¹⁰² Patricia Laurence, *Lily Briscoe’s Chinese Eyes*, 10-12.

Henry Benrimo imitating the Chinese theatre. The play was first performed in the Duke of York's theatre in London between March and August in 1913.¹⁰³ By a comparison of their employment of the property man, stage decoration, and the naming of the characters, I attempt to examine, on the one hand, the ways in which Hsiung conforms to this tradition, and on the other, places where *LPS* performs modernity which breaks through cultural imperialism's perpetuation of a devalued image of an old Cathay through its popular consumption.

Prinko explains the function of the property man in Chinese theatre in comparison to its Western appropriation by arguing that:

He [the property man] is an indispensable adjunct to many forms of Oriental drama, but he has often become, in the hands of an unwitting Westerner, the focal point of the performance. His role is to help the performance in a self-effacing way (...) For the Chinese theatergoer he is invisible (...) when the property man begins bowing to the audience with a flourish or comforting the characters onstage, he is following the practices of neither Japanese nor Chinese theatre. (53)

In Hazelton and Benrimo's description of the property man in the script of *The Yellow Jacket*, he becomes "a character in his own right" and his presence is exploited to perform comic effect (Chang 155). Apart from carrying stage props on and off stage, he walks on stage "indifferently", smokes "complacently". He also reads Chinese papers, smiles and eats rice.¹⁰⁴ Adapting the property man as a scripted character that underlines his deliberate visibility on stage, *The Yellow Jacket* "mimics the application of these [Chinese stage] conventions to create a specific staging of

¹⁰³ See Chang Dongshin, *Representing China on the Historical London Stage*, 152.

¹⁰⁴ See *The Yellow Jacket*, 1, 5, 63, 111, 112.

‘Chinese drama’” (Ju 89), which “reflected and perpetuated the depoliticization and dematerialization of ‘assimilable’ foreignness” (85). Nevertheless, in comparison to and probably also in direct response to Hazelton and Benrimo’s appropriation of the property man in *The Yellow Jacket*,¹⁰⁵ *LPS*’s representation of the two property men in the play strictly confines their function to the practical role as carriers of stage props. For example, in their much less significant presence and activity in *LPS*, the two property men only serve to place chairs, deliver books and trays for the characters.¹⁰⁶ Emphasizing the self-effacing nature of the property man as an important indicator of Chinese theatre’s symbolism, Hsiung attempts to prove *LPS* as being more “authentic” in comparison to Chinese theatre in its Western appropriation, thus establishing his authority as the cultural translator of Chinese theatre for his Western audience.

Auden and Isherwood were among the audience of *LPS*’s performance, which lasted from 1934 to 1936. Benefiting from their journey to China in 1938 as reporters of the Sino-Japanese War, they were able to watch the original Peking Opera version and compare it to the “westernized play called *Lady Precious Stream*” (Auden 62). From their British perspective, “the stage-hands lounge at the back of the stage, in full view of the spectators, occasionally coming forward to place a cushion, adjust the folds in an actor’s robe, or offer a bowl of tea to refresh one of the singers after a difficult passage” (63). Isherwood’s depiction of the stage presentation of the property man in the performance of the original Chinese context

¹⁰⁵ See Hsiung, “Chuguo Dujin qu, Xie Wangbaochuan [出国镀金去, 写《王宝川》]; “Studying abroad and Writing *Lady Precious Stream*”, Xianggang Wenxue (Hong Kong Literature), 21 (September 1986). The article is reprinted in *Bashi Zishu*. Hsiung shows his disapproval of the *The Yellow Jacket* as an inauthentic and melodramatic Anglo-American appropriation of Chinese drama. See *Bashi Zishu*, 27.

¹⁰⁶ See the editing edition of *LPS*, 5, 11, 12, 15.

provides us a frame of reference to understand Hsiung's representation of the property man in Britain. However, by citing Isherwood here, I do not intend to argue that Hsiung's use of the property man in *LPS* is authentically Chinese simply because it imitates more closely the theatrical conventions of Chinese theatre than *The Yellow Jacket* does. As Williams argues, Chinese stage conventions, "[when] wrenched from their theatrical and cultural context, do not fit organically into the performance as they would in a Chinese theatre. Instead, they become quaint distractions from the story, the exact opposite of their original function" (172).¹⁰⁷ Even though Hsiung made much effort to explain and present the role of the property man in a way that tried to adhere to the Chinese stage convention and as close to the contemporary performance in its Peking Opera form as possible, it would not guarantee the property man's reception in Britain and America as Hsiung intended. In a *Manchester Guardian* review of a local reproduction of *LPS* by the Manchester Repertory Company in 1937, the author argues that "A Chinese producer can trust his audience to disregard stage hands who intermingle with the cast, solemnly disposing their symbolic 'props.' but they are bound to attract attention on an English stage, however self-effacing their attitude of distant unconcern" ("Lady Precious Stream" 13). Hsiung's authenticity claim about the property man is ineffective precisely because his emphasis on symbolism reiterates the Western discursive construction of Chinese theatre, which marks a combination of "ethnographic fascination and aesthetic elitism" (Ju 77), restricting China to its aesthetic form.

Hsiung's choice of stage setting for *LPS* is another point of difference from previous Anglo-American adaptations of Chinese theatre. *The Yellow Jacket* employs

¹⁰⁷ Dave Williams, *Misreading the Chinese Character: Images of the Chinese in Euroamerican Drama to 1925*. New York: P. Lang, 2000. Print. Quoted from Ju Yon Kim. "Trying on The Yellow Jacket: Performing Chinese Exclusion and Assimilation," 89.

multiple decorative elements on stage to perform its “authentic” Chineseness: lanterns hung from the ceiling, plaques with Chinese calligraphy on both sides of the back stage above the two visible doors serving as entrance and exit for actors, a group of musicians in Chinese costumes in the alcove of the back stage between the two doors, scrolls in chinoiserie fashion hung on the side walls, and a visible container on the left side of the stage where stage properties are taken and returned by the property man.¹⁰⁸ The symbolic feature of Chinese stage is performed realistically with Hazelton and Benrimo’s scholarly mastery over and presentation of materials that are considered “Chinese”. When it comes to Basil Dean’s 1929 production of *The Circle of Chalk*, another traditional Chinese drama which was translated by James Laver in English in 1929 based on the German poet Klabund’s German translation, the “fully realized, illusionistic representation of a ‘genuine’ Chinese stage” by *The Yellow Jacket* is replaced by a combination of “hi-tech Western stage technology and Chinese lacquered-colour settings and furniture” (Thorpe 89-90). According to Thorpe’s examination of the latter play’s stage representation, a three-dimensional turntable was employed and was pushed by “actors costumed as ‘coolies’” to change scenes for different acts in a chinoiserie style of Chinese woodblock prints of domestic interiors. Where lanterns were used, they were combined with modern kaleidoscopic lighting.¹⁰⁹ Unlike *The Yellow Jacket*’s mimic of Chinese stage conventions, *The Circle of Chalk* makes a more direct modern appropriation of Chinese theatre that implies the “glamour, excess and modernity of pre-Depression 1929” (90).

¹⁰⁸ For images of *The Yellow Jacket*’s stage presentation, see “In the Chinese Manner: ‘The Yellow Jacket,’ at the Duke of York’s.” 4. Quoted from Chang Dongshin. *Representing China on the Historical London Stage: from Orientalism to Intercultural Performance*, 156.

¹⁰⁹ Thorpe, 89-90.

In contrast to both plays, *LPS* uses a bare stage. To a British reviewer, against a “blue-lit backcloth”, only a table and several chairs are placed at the center of the stage.¹¹⁰ The only decorations are a pole with branches and leaves fastened to a chair on the right and a table on the left, respectively symbolizing trees and rocks in an imaginary scenery that demands the audience’s participation using their imagination. In the original Peking Opera version that Auden and Isherwood watched in China, “There is hardly any attempt at scenery; only a single back-drop, some cushions, and a few chairs” (Auden 63). Hsiung’s use of the bare stage shows his attempt to preserve as much as possible what was there in the original opera. However, adding a tree branch and a table on stage to underline Chinese theatre’s symbolic nature in *LPS*’s performance to the Anglo-American audience also reveals that Hsiung consciously builds upon Western construction of Chinese theatre as a modernist form. In Isherwood’s description of the Peking Opera version, “Lady Precious Stream utters some piercing, Disneyesque sounds (...) A general is sent to kill the hero; they engage in a ballet-fight” (63-4). For Western viewers of Peking Opera, the unfamiliar singing style and acrobatic movement enter their narrative through an analogy with their Western cultural equivalence. In Peking Opera’s circulation from China to the West, this narrative analogy usually bears a heavier ideological significance than Isherwood’s case demonstrates. At the same time when Hsiung’s use of the bare stage denies Hazelton and Benrimo’s “realistic” representation of the Chinese stage with various forms of cultural symbols of China, Hsiung’s method in defining the bare stage as symbolism marks his capitalization on British elitist and aesthetic appropriation of Chinese theatre as a modernist form. Nevertheless, the play’s British reception demonstrates the plural form of Orientalism, as the same feature of stage

¹¹⁰ ““Lady Precious Stream’: Little Theatre Production,” 10.

setting can be simultaneously commented as radical symbolism and primitivism.¹¹¹

On another note, as has been suggested by Yeh, the choice of presenting a bare stage may also have been due to commercial considerations.¹¹² Nancy Price's *People's National Theatre* was funded by subscription, and was in constant financial difficulty. Production of *LPS* with its bare stage meant that she could save money from stage setting to invest in costumes as an indicator of authenticity, while simultaneously appealing to the public's fancy for the bare stage with their publicity of Chinese theatre as being symbolic.

In addition to the use of the property man and stage setting, the naming of the characters in *LPS* is yet another way to represent "Chineseness". Hazelton and Benrimo's use of Chinese calligraphy in *The Yellow Jacket's* stage setting, with the assistance from the Cantonese-speaking Chinese community, reflects the immigrant identity of the Chinese community in America.¹¹³ In addition, Chinese also appears in the form of naming the play's characters. In its list of characters, names appear in English but are pronounced in Cantonese. Attached to each name is their literal meaning translated into English, thus making the play a highly allegorical story. Particularly interesting is the naming of the two half-brothers of the Wu family fighting for their legitimate inheritance of the power. The second son, Wu Fah Din (Daffodil), describes himself as possessing "feminine qualities of great luxuriance" (Hazelton 63). The creation of this effeminate character marks a gendered racialization of the Orient.¹¹⁴ In contrast, the first son, Wu Hoo Git, is given the

¹¹¹ See Yeh, *The Happy Hsiungs*, 80-1.

¹¹² See Yeh, "Staging China, Excising the Chinese: *Lady Precious Stream* and the Darker side of Chinoiserie." 182.

¹¹³ See Chang, 157.

¹¹⁴ See Chang, 159.

meaning as the “Young Hero of the Wu Family” and is described as “destined for the Yellow Jacket”, the symbol of power and authority.¹¹⁵ Through the naming of its characters, *The Yellow Jacket* represents the Chinese as the racial other and uses them to perform the victory of masculinity over effeminacy.

In *LPS*, the female protagonist’s first name, if literally translated from Chinese into English, is Precious Bracelet. Hsiung changes it into Precious Stream because he considers “stream” as a more poetic and artistic image for the expression of female quality.¹¹⁶ This strategy of naming fits into Hsiung’s overall consideration to represent traditional Chinese theatre as highbrow and literary. In the meantime, Hsiung presents the name of the male protagonist, Hsieh Ping-Kuei, in its romanization. The full preservation of this Chinese name serves as an unmistakable indicator of Chineseness in its masculine form. Though Hsieh rises from poverty to fame by turning into a foreign king, to his Western audience, his Chinese name helps maintain his Chinese identity intact. This textual justification of China and the Chinese male’s masculinity reflects Hsiung’s anxiety in his struggle for authority on a personal level. Relatively small in figure, having a baby face without facial hairs, Hsiung’s appearance has much to do with the many rejections of *LPS* by publishers and producers: “those who read the manuscript first would no longer believe in the play the moment they met me, and those who met me first seldom cared to read the manuscript” (Hsiung, Afterthought 164). Even after he had established himself with the success of *LPS*, the same problem still bothered him: “Whenever I was introduced as a playwright and my work for the Chinese stage mentioned, the invariable question put to me was, ‘Well, how old are you?’” (164). The question,

¹¹⁵ See *The Yellow Jacket*’s list of characters.

¹¹⁶ See Hsiung’s Chinese introduction to the Chinese translation of *Lady Precious Stream* in the bilingual version of the play, published by the Commercial Press in 2006, 191-2.

together with the way the question is put, implies a gendered racialization of Hsiung's Chinese body and a denial of Hsiung's authority and authenticity with his lack of physical masculinity.

In addition to the use of the property man, bare stage, and the naming of the characters, the Honorable Reader opens another space in which Hsiung negotiates with Western appropriations of Chinese theatre to perform his (diasporic) Chinese identity. The Reader appears at the beginning of each of the four acts to introduce the Chinese stage conventions and inform the audience of the plot development. Northrop Frye's experience in watching *LPS* in London in 1936 informs us of the physical appearance of the Reader in performance:

It [*LPS*] impressed me as a very slickly tailored piece of Chinoiserie, and to anyone who had seen a real Chinese play produced under authentically Chinese conditions, it was ridiculous. The players shuffled around and simpered made-in-Hollywood wisecracks at each other, the stage connections were worked to death--some ass with a dinner jacket and carnation came out to remind us facetiously at the beginning of each act that we would just have to use our imaginations, as the Chinese weren't clever enough to think of scenery, and the orchestra consisted of a dismal squeak offstage, as though someone were sticking pins in a guinea pig, which occurred when someone came on the stage. The audience cooed and purred and thought the Chinese were just too cute for words. No declamation, no orchestral accompaniment, no pantomime, not the faintest suggestion that any of these things existed. It wasn't funny enough to be a parody, however, because of all the jokes and epigrams that were so earnestly and conscientiously shoveled in (568).

Frye's depiction of the performance not only rightly points out *LPS*'s lack of music

and pantomime as points of the play's inauthenticity. He also proves the incongruity of the "some ass" (the Reader) with the traditional setting of the play in his modern and Western-style dressing. The inclusion of the Reader into the play resembles Hazelton and Benrimo's creation of the Chorus in *The Yellow Jacket* as a cultural translator, but they perform the same role in a different manner which reveals the authors' different imaginings of racial relations. In *The Yellow Jacket*, the Chorus enters the stage in a costume "of a rich Chinese scholar, the dominant note being red. His manner is most dignified. His actions are ceremonious" (Hazelton 1). This "Chinese" dressing and manner undoubtedly refers to the Chorus as another source of authenticity. The way he instructs his audience in the first-person narration to introduce "our most unworthy theatre" (2) turns him into "a humorous caricature of a 'Chinese scholar', in a racialized adaptation of the Greek chorus" (Ju 79). The yellowface performance of the Chorus, both as a character and a translator, by white actors in makeup and costume, mimicks the Chinese in their total absence and appropriates the authority to both physically represent the Chinese and discursively explain the Chinese theatre.¹¹⁷

With his "dinner jacket and carnation", *LPS*'s Honorable Reader alienates himself from characters of the play in yellowface. He functions as a cultural translator without pretending to be a Chinese character. In the script, Hsiung presents the Reader as a more or less serious role, whose sole function is to introduce Chinese stage conventions and plot to the audience in an objective manner, objective because there is no self-asserting erudition or authority, nor extra performance beyond being verbal. The Reader's claim that "the Chinese weren't clever enough to think of scenery" is not in the script. Depending on whether this is Hsiung's adaptation or the

¹¹⁷ Ju Yon Kim more thoroughly examines the inclusion of the Chorus in the American context and its ideological significance.

actor's improvisation, this is a mocking (or self-mocking) manner to remind the audience of the different stage conventions of Chinese theatre. Frye's narration of this experience with *LPS* in London comes from a letter that dates back to the 21 September 1936, when *LPS* had been running on London's stage for nearly two years (starting from November 1934). Regardless of all local adaptations of the play outside of London or even outside of Britain, which Hsiung did not have any control, even for the London performances Hsiung had to constantly supervise the production to ensure it would not go awry. For example, Hsiung recalls that:

“During the very long run of the play in London, I was a frequent visitor at the theatre. I had to go there sometimes to see that Esme Percy did not wear a peculiar headdress for which he had a particular weakness, and that some of the actors did not take off their beards, an act which they found irresistible” (Afterthought 170).

It reveals that in minor aspects such as the makeup and the line, Hsiung had to compete for authority with his British actors/actresses over the representation of Chinese theatrical conventions.

In *LPS*'s New York production, Hsiung had the Honorable Reader perform a modern Chinese subjectivity by casting a Chinese actress as the Reader. The Chinese actress is Mai-Mai Sze, daughter of Alfred Sze, who was the Chinese ambassador to Washington. Whereas the well-known Chinese America actress Anna May Wong did not get the chance to play the female protagonist.¹¹⁸ In her discussion of this casting choice, Shen Shuang argues that:

“Lady Precious Stream” failed to bring the diasporic Chinese subject and the immigrant subject together. Predictably, it also did not attempt to represent

¹¹⁸ Anna May Wong expresses her interests in *LPS*'s American production in her letter to Hsiung. See Shen Shuang, footnote 16, 96-7.

the life in Chinese immigrant community. However, Hsiung's contact with [Anna May] Wong shows that the best way to judge this play is to think of it as a performative occasion that elicited the heterogeneity of "Chineseness".¹¹⁹

Underlying Shen's argument is the preconception that Hsiung "should have" brought the diasporic and the immigrant subject together and "should have" represented the life in [the American] Chinese immigrant community (understanding that Shen frames Hsiung and *LPS*'s performance predominantly in the American context). This method of establishing transnational connections between (Chinese) diasporas references contemporary theorization of diaspora, which underlines "decentered, lateral connections" and relies on "a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance" (J. Clifford 306). One contemporary example that can very well illustrate this notion of transnationalism is the transatlantic and transnational coalition between East Asian acting communities who jointly protested against the color-blind casting strategy by the Royal Shakespeare Company's 2012 production of the traditional Chinese drama *The Orphan of Zhao*. Its casting of three actors and actresses of East Asian origins in minor and stereotypical roles out of a total number of seventeen were regarded as seriously underrepresenting Britain's East Asian acting community. Supports from the Chinese and East Asian communities in America and elsewhere also manifests a transnational dimension in the demand of racial and ethnic diversity against institutional discrimination. I will discuss this incident and its cultural significance in understanding the notion of transnationalism in further detail in my conclusion. The reason I mention it here is to connect and compare the contemporary to the historical,

¹¹⁹ See Shen Shuang, footnote 16, 97.

and ask how we should historically examine the significance of *LPS*'s production and performance in our understanding of the Chinese diasporic identity.

LPS did provide a space for different subjects to reimagine Chineseness in its transnational context. As the quotation from Hsiung at the very beginning of this chapter shows, his adaptation of this Chinese play into English aimed at protesting against stereotypes of China and the Chinese in Anglo-American popular culture. As the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong has queried,

Why is it that the screen Chinese is nearly always the villain of the piece ... and so cruel a villain ... We are not like that. How should we be, with a civilization that's so many times older than that of the West? We have our own virtues. We have our rigid code of behavior, of honor. Why do they never show these on the screen? Why should we always scheme, rob, kill? I get so weary of it all—the scenarist's concept of Chinese characters.¹²⁰

Wong's indignation resembles Hsiung's criticism in face of a common and transatlantic production and circulation of images of China and the Chinese: from the American play *The Yellow Jacket*'s European and American productions in the 1910s, to *The Circle of Chalk*'s London production in 1929 and its inclusion of the Chinese American Anna May Wong. *LPS*'s circulation from London to New York, indicates the possibility to establish a transnational alliance against the transatlantic circulation of stereotypes of the Chinese. But why did not *LPS*'s American casting realize this possibility?

Acknowledging Hsiung's diasporic Chinese identity while blaming him for his failure to represent the immigrant Chinese identity indicates a self-paradoxical

¹²⁰ See Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1990, 332-3. Quoted from Jeffrey Richards, *China and the Chinese in Popular Film: from Fu Manchu to Charlie Chan*, 68.

way in envisioning the heterogeneity of “Chineseness”. It also reveals the presumption that the diasporic and the immigrant subjects should be brought together in the decentered and lateral model of transnationalism. Perhaps a better way to examine this issue is to change the way we set the question. Instead of demanding what Hsiung “should have” done, we can simply ask why he did not: why did he construct the diasporic identity as it was? Why did he not represent the (American) immigrant subject? When we answer these questions, we need to put Hsiung into the specific temporal and spatial frame in the 1930s as a Chinese living in Britain (but not in America). In his explanation of the diasporic group’s difference from the immigrant community in its relations to the assimilationist national ideologies, James Clifford argues that, “Whether the national narrative is one of common origins or of gathered populations, it cannot assimilate groups that maintain important allegiances and practical connections to a homeland or a dispersed community located elsewhere” (307). Hsiung and Wong’s difference in their representation of “Chineseness” is generational (with Hsiung being the first-generation Chinese immigrating to Britain and Wong as American-born Chinese) as well as spatial (with the difference between Britain and America). When the Chinese community in Britain in the early twentieth century was decidedly smaller than the one in America, the Chinese were also more of a racial than an ethnic other. Moreover, Chinese in Britain also showed a clear class division, generally between the educated and the lower class.¹²¹

Looking historically at Hsiung and *LPS*’s construction of the image of China as an auto-ethnographic expression, we can compare them with other auto-ethnographic articulations by the Chinese in Britain (or America) in the 1920s and

¹²¹ Seed, John. “Limehouse Blues: Looking for ‘Chinatown’ in the London Docks, 1900-1940,” 58-85.

1930s. They include, for example, *London Through Chinese Eyes* (1920) by Min Ch'ien T. Z. Tyau (1880-1974), who studied law in Britain between 1901 and 1910 and held various posts later on in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Republican China. They also include *China But Not Cathay* (1942) by Xiao Qian (1910-1999), who was a rare Chinese war journalist in Europe during the Second World War. Lao She's *Mr Man and Son* (1929) is now a more well-known literary representation of the Anglo-Chinese relations in late 1920s due to the recent translations of this novel into English and to the growing scholarly attention paid to this text in British academia as an early Chinese perspective that contributes to the rethinking of the Anglo-Chinese relations in early twentieth century. But the novel was composed in Chinese and published in China and therefore is not regarded here as a typical example of auto-ethnography. However, this distinction between the Anglophone and Sinophone writing is useful here only because Hsiung's English writings got immediate responses from the English world. This facilitates me to examine the texts and their discussion in a comparative context. Otherwise, reading Hsiung in comparison to Lao She should enlighten our understanding of their discussion about imperialism and nationalism and will contribute to contemporary debate over transnationalism and identity making. On another note, my focus in this thesis is primarily on the Anglo-Chinese relations. Even though Yutang Lin was the better-known bilingual author in Chinese and English in the 1930s, his activities and influences were mostly in America.

We understand that Hsiung's choice of Mai-Mai Sze as the Honorable Reader in *LPS*'s American production indicates his nationalist stance in the imagination of China. In contemporary theoretical construction of the diasporic Chinese identity by

such scholars as Rey Chow,¹²² the transition to the transnationalist approach aims to deconstruct the myth of Sino-centrism, which refers to the culturally Confucian tradition that stresses on blood relations and to the political existence of Communist China in the contemporary context. While we need to guard against the suppression of diversity by such centrism, we also need to acknowledge the deconstructive power over the imperialist ideology in Hsiung's nationalist imagination of a semi-colonial China in international relations in the 1930s. Rey Chow's argument that "diasporic consciousness is perhaps not so much a historical accident as it is an intellectual reality—the reality of being intellectual" (17) puts the issue of diaspora in a Rushdian way in seeing it as an existential question. In seeing the role of diasporic intellectuals as confronting "the power, wealth, and privilege that ironically accumulate from their 'oppositional' viewpoint, and the widening gap between the professed contents of their words and the upward mobility they gain from such words" (17), Rey Chow insists that diasporic intellectuals maintain a criticality of the governing ideologies with a class consciousness. Accepting her method of establishing the diasporic identity, we should also critically examine Hsiung's criticality and his lack of it in his imagination of nation and the Chinese diasporic identity in *LPS*. In the next two sections, I will examine how *LPS* aims to reconstruct equal international relations on the textual level. I will also analyze how its performance in yellowface assists Hsiung in avoiding the performance of miscegenation and in engaging in the discussion of the gendered relations between China and the West.

¹²² For example, see Rey Chow, *Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies*.

***LPS*, Miscegenation, and the Imagination of the Diasporic Identity**

The only serious offence I have committed is that I have brought in an extra character: that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Lest he might prove out of harmony, I have given him only four speeches and a very short appearance. In ancient China, men were polygamous, so the King of the Western Regions could have Lady Precious Stream as his Queen-Proper and the Princess as his Vice-Queen. Since the revolution in 1911, the law of our country forbids a man to have more than one wife, and my solution of the difficulty is the introduction of this man of the world whose sole duty is to help me to get an extra lady off my hands. (Hsiung, *Afterwords* 173-4)

Hsiung thus explains the significance of creating the new character of the foreign minister in *LPS*. This character helps Hsiung rewrite the gender relations to represent modern China. However, in the transnational production and circulation of the play, the geographical notion of the “Western Regions” changes both in the play’s production and reception. The Minister of Foreign Affairs appears in *LPS*’s final scene. In the play’s acting edition, when the Princess of the Western Regions asks the Minister where he has learnt the manner of her own country by offering one’s arm to a lady, the Minister replies by saying “London”.¹²³ Even though this sudden reference to the realistic space of London in a traditional Chinese setting may have most likely created a comic effect to cater to a London audience, it reveals Hsiung’s attempt to redefine the notion of sovereignty and foreign relations through the substitution of the West (Britain more specifically) for the “Western Regions”. This modern appropriation of the ancient geographical concepts performs unmistakably to his British audience a cultural difference between China and the

¹²³ See Hsiung, *Lady Precious Stream*, acting edition: 92.

West and expresses a nationalist claim for equality in modern foreign relations. In this renewed geographical space, gender relations simultaneously represent the imagined and more equal international relations through border and border-crossing, both in text and performance.

The relations between the Western Regions and China in the original Peking Opera texts imply a Sinocentric definition of the center and the periphery. In the Peking Opera texts, having become the King of the Western Regions, Hsieh Ping-Kuei returns to China with his foreign troops to suppress Wang Yun's political rebellion. Hsieh's victory over Wang restores order in China and legitimizes his enthronement as the Chinese emperor. The story of a Chinese whose conquest of foreign lands serves to glorify the power of China implies the ancient Chinese notion of the civilized self and the barbarian other. In *LPS*, Hsiung omits the plot of Wang's rebellion and defines Hsieh's return to China as a foreign and diplomatic visit that strictly adheres to the order and authority of the Chinese emperor. No transgression occurs. For example, the messenger of the Emperor of China brings everyone the message, "His Imperial Majesty orders the Prime Minister Wang to welcome His Majesty Hsieh Ping-Kuei, the King of the Western Regions, to his Court tomorrow, and bring Wei the Tiger General with him, under arrest!" (Hsiung, *Lady Precious Stream* 149) As the relationship between the Western Regions and China has changed into one between Britain (the West) and China during the play's circulation from China to Britain, this arrangement to have Hsieh and his troops settle personal issues in a different sovereign state by observing its rules performs a call for the independence of China's sovereignty from foreign interference. Hsiung himself was well aware of the social context in which he made this textual change, when he argues that:

Before the Manchus got into contact with the Western world, they overrated much too much the power of the Celestial Empire. And after such disastrous contact in the form of the looting of Peking and the burning of Yuen Ming Yuan Palace by the allied forces of Britain and France in 1860, the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 and the looting of Peking by the armies of the Eight Powers in 1900, foreigners and their power were very much overrated. The Chinese government officials were suddenly smitten with an inferiority complex which kept on growing until the outbreak of the present war with Japan. (Hsiung, Afterthought 188)

The shifting power relations between China and the West in modern history result in the conceptual change in the relationship between the self and the other. In *LPS*, as a foreign king with a Chinese origin, Hsieh performs a diasporic subject who simultaneously practices border-crossing and maintains the sovereign boundary. Deconstructing both Sino-centrism and the inferiority complex, Hsiung aimed to establish equal international relations that were much in want in Republican China's struggle for sovereignty against Japan and the West in the international community.

Hsieh's border-crossing and double identity enlighten our understanding of Hsiung in his method in establishing his diasporic identity. Hsieh's successful experience in the "West" only takes on a significance through a return to his native country. This metaphorical return to home represents China as an "imaginary homeland" for Hsiung to reconstruct his political and cultural diasporic subjectivity in Britain. Besides *LPS*, Hsiung's other English writings all register his imagination of modern China, which he left for Britain in 1931. In *The Professor from Peking*, Hsiung recounts China's political history between 1919 and 1937 to present China's struggle for political unity under the leadership of the Nationalist government to

fight against Japan's invasion, under the background of the Sino-Japanese War and the immediate threat of war in Europe. This play served as a war propaganda in order to appeal to the West's sympathy towards China. In the years during the Second World War, Hsiung narrates the history of late Qing China to reconstruct the relationship between tradition and modernity, and between China and the West in *The Bridge of Heaven*. This literary return to the "imaginary homeland" represents Hsiung's forever delayed return to the native land in real life.

Hsieh's relationship to his native country in *LPS* illuminates a desirable model for Hsiung to establish his personal attachment to China as a Chinese national in Britain. In *LPS*, Hsieh is forced to leave China for the Western Regions by persecution. He gains power and fame in the adopted country through personal efforts. His new identity brings a new dynamic to the existing social relations in China. But this new identity serves to foreground China's political sovereignty and to highlight his Chinese cultural identity. When we look at Hsiung's transnational experience in China and Britain, we can identify a "coincidence" between Hsieh as a character and Hsiung as the writer. As I have demonstrated in the introduction, the social mechanism and cultural institution in modern China urged Hsiung to go to Britain to earn a degree in English in order to raise his chance to be a lecturer in a government university in China. The incidental success of *LPS* in London established Hsiung as a social celebrity in Britain. This international fame raised his status in China. Hsiung became a cultural ambassador between Britain and China.

By juxtaposing Hsieh and Hsiung's experiences, I do not intend to use Hsiung's biographical information to support a positivist reading of *LPS*. Because the minute equivalence is bound to be anachronistic: when *LPS* was composed in June 1933 in Hsiung's obscurity, his diasporic experience lasts throughout the 1930s

and beyond and witnesses his change from obscurity to fame, as the exact result of *LPS*'s success. Instead, I propose to read Hsiung's transcultural travel as a novel. As has been shown in my chapter on Bertrand Russell, I borrow this method of fictionalizing historical characters from Eric Hayot, who reads Russell's travel to China as a novel. This method helps him to read Russell and his discourse of the Chinese national character against the cultural and social mechanism that produced the Western tradition of representing the Other. This way of fictionalization facilitates us to historicize and contextualize certain discourses. It helps us seek for the inevitability of them in their cultural and social mechanism. To fictionalize Hsiung's diasporic experience, I intend to recover the transnational condition in which he imagined diasporic subject's relationship to the homeland and examine how he responded to the material condition of the Anglo-Chinese relations. In this light, Hsieh in *LPS* and Hsiung in the novel about his journey to the West are both results of the same transnational production and circulation. They illuminate each other in understanding the formation of the Chinese diasporic subjectivity in Britain in the 1930s.

As has been discussed earlier, both the creation of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the invitation of the Chinese ambassador to London Guo Taichi authenticate *LPS* as a representation of modern international relations between China and the West. What happened to individuals who were situated in these relations? Reading Hsieh as a diasporic subject who seeks for his place in this renewed geographic and cultural space requires us to imagine the ways in which the subject rises to fame in the adopted country and imagines the home country in its absence. In the novel about Hsiung, he makes his success through various forms of cooperation and compromise in producing a traditional Chinese play on the London stage.

Challenges to his authority and authenticity as a Chinese are constant. But the marketability of traditional Chinese culture makes him the first Chinese director in London and America. Economic stability changes his sojourn into indefinite residence in Britain. It also suspends his original plan to return to China to secure an academic position. The creation of lectureship in English literature in Chinese universities and Chinese students' pursuit of their degree in the West and Japan in such modern subjects as foreign languages/literatures and sciences are both results of this encounter between the West and the East in modern history. So is the chinoiserie tradition in Britain that can date back to the eighteenth century. This transnational cultural mechanism defines the academic and cultural exchanges between Britain and China through such cultural agents as Hsiung. They form a community of cosmopolitan Chinese in Britain that includes diplomats, artists, writers, and students. *The Flower Exile* presents the Hsiung family as the center of such a small and elite Chinese presence in London and Oxford in the 1930s and 1940s.

To Hsiung, the personal identity as a diasporic writer is intimately attached to China's national identity. Hsieh's personal establishment in a foreign land serves to be a literary confirmation of China's sovereignty. At the end of *LPS*, Hsieh and Precious Stream unite in the native land of China, when the Princess of the Western Regions is sent off stage by the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This reconfiguration of the social relations, as Yeh argues, performs monogamy "to suit the sensibility and moral and sexual principles of British theatergoers" (40). Yet, highlighting the British context as the origin of producing modern sensibility in opposition to Chinese traditions tends to obscure the context of modern China as an equally legitimate space of meaning making: how "Western" sensibility and morality traveled to China and what happened when they were received and translated by the

Chinese are equally important in our examination of Hsiung's adaptation. I will examine this Chinese context's importance to Hsiung's literary production in more details in later sections of this chapter. For now, I attempt to demonstrate that Hsiung's representation of monogamous love relations performs a resistance to the gendered relationship between China and the West, through the textual representation and the color-blind casting of the triangular relations between Hsieh, Precious Stream, and the Princess of the Western Regions.

In the early-twentieth-century British context in which *LPS* performed this Chinese perspective in its re-imagination of the Anglo-Chinese relations, the historical London stage equally witnessed a substitution of the relations between China and the West for those between China and the Tartars in its appropriations of Chinese theatre and Chinese themes. As Chang observes:

The Jesuit writings gave rise to the persistent, interculturated dramatization of the Chinese-Tartar conflict in which the Tartars were conceived as China's perennial enemy, its political and cultural other ... by the early twentieth century the Tartars had been replaced by the British (Westerners) in dramatizations of interracial conflict. (6)

In this interracial conflict, the identity of China can evidently be read as gendered and feminized:

As the conflicts usually involve romantic interests between a female Chinese and a male Tartar (British). The distinct feminization of China in each case and the discernible changes in these depictions over the historical period reflect the intercultural formation of China's femininity and the trend toward trivialization and exoticization. (6)

In the early twentieth century, apart from theatre, cinema adds to this visual representation of China and the Chinese in Britain. Feminization of China also takes various forms. For example, *The Yellow Jacket* presents an effeminate Chinese male as illegitimate to inherit family authority that demands masculinity. A similar portrait of the effeminate Chinese male in yellow face (white actors performing Chinese/East Asian characters in makeup and costume, etc.) appear in the American director David Wark Griffith's movie *Broken Blossoms* (1919), based on Thomas Burke's story "The Chink and the Child", to represent interracial love. Feminization of China also takes the form of "authentic" casting strategy, in which female "Chinese" actresses are employed to perform interracial love with either white actors in yellow face or white characters (particularly Anna May Wong in her performance in *The Circle of Chalk* on the London stage and in the movie *Piccadilly*, both in 1929 in succession to each other). I will contextualize *LPS* in these theatrical and cinematic representations of gendered relations between China and the West and examine the meaning of Hsiung's color-blind casting strategy (white actors/actresses performing Chinese/East Asian characters in yellow face) in comparison to *The Circle of Chalk*'s "authentic" casting of Wong. I will also interpret Hsiung's construction of the Chinese diasporic identity in comparison to Wong's immigrant Chinese American identity and the Limehouse Chinese in London.

Regardless of the fact that *The Circle of Chalk* is a traditional Chinese drama, its textual adaptations and its British theatrical production rephrase it as a typical example in performing a gendered interracial love between the Western male and the Chinese female. On the textual level, James Laver, in the introduction to his 1929 English translation of Klabund's German adaptation of the play in 1924, speaks in praise of the changes the German poet has made in plot to

tone down its [the play's] ruthlessness [...] and provide what is called 'love-interest'" (between the widowed female protagonist Hai Tang and the emperor who saves her by proving her innocent of murder and returning her the ownership of her baby, the legitimate heir of her dead husband's house) and celebrates this as the Western substitution of "Humanitarianism for Morality" (xi).

In the play's 1929 London production, the English producer Basil Dean casts the Chinese American actress Anna May Wong as Hai Tang in an otherwise yellow face representation of male Chinese characters by white actors, thus performing an interracial love between the "Chinese" Hai Tang and the white emperor. Even though these casting opportunities provided by the British film industry for non-white actors and actresses such as Wong made her and the British journalists criticize American racism in favor of Britain, their praise could not obscure the no less racist and sexist casting of Wong in the British theatre and film industry.¹²⁴ Like *The Circle of Chalk's* mixture of modern stage techniques with elements of Chinese stage conventions, it similarly exploits Wong's "Chineseness" as the erotic object of (white) male gazing and desire. This sexual objectification of Wong manifests itself through visual presentations of her on stage in costume and dancing. According to Thorpe, Wong wore modern dancing dresses that left large parts of her body exposed (legs and arms). This dressing and dancing style was pretty much an imitation of her widely acclaimed appearance and movement in *Piccadilly*,¹²⁵ in which she acts a Limehouse Chinese girl rising from poverty to fame as a result of similar racial and sexual exploitation in the entertainment industry in London.

¹²⁴ See Karen Leong, *The China Mistique*, 85.

¹²⁵ See Thorpe, *Performing China on the London Stage*, 90-94.

In *Piccadilly*, Shosho's (played by Wong) every movement from a "little Chinese girl in the scullery" to the star in the dancing pool of the Piccadilly Club is presented through the Club manager Mr. Wilmot's (played by the English film actor Jameson Thomas) gaze and objectification of Wong's body and dancing: from Shosho's first introduction to the film dancing in the scullery, to her interview with Wilmot in his office where he gazes at her and draws her portrait on the paper, and to her commercial dancing debut in the club in her "authentic" Chinese costume. Wilmot successfully exploits "Shosho in a real Chinese dance" for business novelty and commercial success. Nevertheless, the film confers upon Shosho the authority to present the authenticity of her Chineseness by letting her define what is "real Chinese" costume and dance. For example, when Wilmot suggests to Shosho that "You need a Chinese costume—there's place in Soho" (39:20), she responds by saying "No-not Soho. There's only one place for Chinese costumes—it's a shop in Limehouse" (39:34). However, this seeming discursive victory of a Chinese over a British in prescribing what is authentically Chinese only proves temporary. Shosho's self-claimed authenticity of the Limehouse Chinese shop, which is owned by her Chinese lover Jim's family, betrays itself with Shosho's calculation for an upward social mobility and by the costume and dance's conscious appeal to the already eroticized image of Chinese women. With Shosho's claim that "I want him [Wilmot]—and I shall keep him" (1:31:02), the film presents her not only as an object of white male gazing, but also as the subject of desire. Both Wong's Chinese heritage and London's Limehouse Chinese can only justify their authenticity through their commercial value in London's West End and through the gendered relations between Chinese women and white men. This cinematic appropriation of the Chinese therefore simultaneously registers Britain's exclusion of the Chinese

presence in London. The film presents the public sentiment in their disquiet about miscegenation. For instance, in a public dancing scene in a pub, the white male pub owner publicly criticizes a black male (played authentically by a black actor) because of the latter's attempt to dance with a white woman: "You know that's not allowed in my place—dancing with a white girl" (1:18:23). This public scene, however, forms an interesting contrast to the relations between Shosho and Wilcot in the display of miscegenation. When the slightest hint at sexuality between colored men and white women is disapproved in public, the sexual relations between white men and Chinese women (Wilmot and Shosho) is suggested and exploited in private.

In Hsiung's *The Bridge of Heaven*, the representation of British characters also expresses a gender difference. While the text criticizes the superiority mentality of the British headmaster of the missionary school, it depicts his wife as a more sympathetic character whose interests in her Chinese pupils reveal her curiosity for romance and thrills (194-8). The diversity of British imagination of China has been explored earlier, especially through the discussion of miscegenation. In his novel *Mr Ma and Son: Two Chinese in London* (*Er Ma*, 1929), the Chinese writer Lao She represents the possibility of interracial love between Mr Ma and his British landlady Mrs Wedderburn, even though the pressure of racial prejudice overwhelms the mutual understanding built upon the removal of Chinese stereotypes. The theme of miscegenation similarly appears in British representations of the Chinese, although for a very different purpose. One example is Thomas Burke's collection of short stories, *Limehouse Nights* (1913). His portrayal of the romance between the Limehouse Chinese men and the local British women "turns the Asiatic presence in Limehouse into a potentially moralizing force in contradistinction to the corrupt,

almost irredeemable slum-dwellers who, by themselves, lack agency for change” (Forman 200).

Back in *Piccadilly*, Jim shoots Shosho dead out of jealousy and then commits suicide. Jim’s confession renders both Wilmot and his white female lover innocent and irrelevant from the possible charge of murdering Shosho. Meanwhile, his suicide demonstrates the “Chinese” way of solving their issues between themselves, which escapes the authority of the (British) court. This judicial separation of the Chinese from the British system implies an exclusion of the Limehouse Chinese from the citizenship of London. In a similar way, in “The Chink and the Child”, even though Thomas Burke romanticizes his male Chinese protagonist by presenting his caring and tenderness to the British girl, he simultaneously makes the Chinese avenge the British girl’s death by gun shooting the girl’s father and then commit suicide. The same suicidal ending indicates the unwillingness of the Chinese to submit to the British law and the latter’s inability to socially incorporate the Chinese, thus leaving the legal status and social identity of the Chinese in London and Britain suspended.

We can examine *LPS*’s color-blind casting strategy in a similar way as Teng does when she acknowledges the function of positive orientalism presented by *Broken Blossoms* “within a limited and historically particular framework”, where “the Chinese man can be simultaneously idealized and feminized” (86). It is not exactly known how casting strategies for *LPS*’s British and American productions were made (between Hsiung and his British producer Nancy Price and between Hsiung and his American producer Morris Guest), but the color-blind casting strategy was adopted for both productions (except the inclusion of Mai-Mai Sze in the New York production as the Honorable Reader, who, however, is not involved in the play’s social relations as a scripted character). The yellow face performance by

white actors as the male protagonist Hsieh sticks unsurprisingly to the Anglo-American convention in casting male Chinese protagonist in yellow face: whether it is the effeminate Wu Fah Din in *The Yellow Jacket*, the Yellow man in the *Broken Blossoms*, the menacing and patriarchal Fu Manchu, the male Chinese protagonist Yuan Sing in *The Chinese Bungalow* (1940), or the Chinese farmer Wang Lung in *The Good Earth* (1937), etc., there is an unanimous denial of physical male Chinese presence and possible miscegenation between Chinese men and white women onscreen.

By contrast, *LPS*'s casting of white actresses for the role of Precious Stream avoids repeating the Western convention of representing the gendered relationship between white male (in yellow face) and Chinese female (in authentic casting). By not casting actresses of Chinese origin, such as Wong, *LPS*'s performance somehow also avoids obscuring the actual interracial relationship between Hsieh and the Princess of the Western Regions and the ideological connotations of this relationship which Hsiung attempts to express with his textual adaptation. In this light, *LPS*'s color-blind casting presents certain forms of resistance under the background that "authentic" casting in Anglo-American theatre and cinema around the 1930s usually performs a gendered relationship between Chinese women and white men at the price of exploiting the former's exoticism and sexuality.

This resistant stance partly derives from Hsiung's textual reconfiguration of the relations between Hsieh, Precious Stream and the Western Princess. With Hsiung's textual construction of Hsieh as a symbol of the masculine modern Chinese national identity, the maintenance of the monogamous relationship between Hsieh and Precious Stream and the denial of the interracial love between Hsieh and the Western Princess create a moral and ideological separation between the Chinese and

the Western. In the *Flowery Exile*, Dymia Hsiung has her children examine her disapproving attitude towards interracial love: “She thinks the children of such an alliance are bound to suffer: for while the English would not consider them English, the Chinese would not consider them Chinese either” (239-40). While the children understand that this is true to a certain extent in Britain in the 1940s where they grow up, their less biased attitude towards interracial love differs them from their parents (the Hsiungs) in perceiving their Chinese identity. Compared to the first-generation Chinese immigrants, the second generation imagines the interracial love interests less in association with the morality and politics that constantly register the political presence of China and the traditional Chinese culture as the root. In *The Bridge of Heaven*, Hsiung arranges the mother and daughter dialogue in order to preserve the cultural and therefore identity difference between China and the West. The daughter Lotus Fragrance says that “Mrs. Ma [wife of the British headmaster of the missionary school] told me that in the West the young people have entire freedom in marriage. Even their parents cannot force them” (192). Her mother answers, “China cannot be compared with any country in the West. We must think of propriety first. If a girl declares openly whom she loves and whom she doesn’t, she will be condemned by society as shameless” (192). By generalizing the difference between the Chinese and the Western notion of marriage, Hsiung disrupts Western morality as being universal. The issue of morality is simultaneously bound up with cultural and national difference.

Nevertheless, this ideological transfer from text to performance is partial so that the resistance of Hsiung’s color-blind casting strategy is merely passive. It is passive in the sense that it adopts color-blind casting to avoid recreating racialized and eroticized images of female Chinese without challenging the methodology itself.

An authentic casting of *LPS* according to Hsiung's ideological construction of the gender relations would have had a white actress perform the foreign Princess and a male Chinese actor as Hsieh. But the physical presence of Chinese men (not in the yellow face acting by white actors, as *Broken Blossoms* or *The Chinese Bungalow* does) in love with white women would have been too challenging to the Anglo-American norm in representing miscegenation. The commercial motivation of producing *LPS* needs to guarantee that its theme in performance cater to rather than radically reverse the general public's received notion of interracial love.

With this color-blind casting, however, *LPS*'s New York performance may have frustrated certain Chinese American actors and actresses' expectations of the play, not only as a fair representation of the Chinese against many stereotypical roles but also as a potential job opportunity for the Chinese (and East Asian) American acting community. One Chinese American actor addresses similar concerns in his excitement at *LPS*'s American production, "Whenever a Chinese play is produced or Chinese character is used, they've never failed to make him the menace, the hideous Fu Manchu type. You can understand ... how elated I was when I heard about 'Precious Stream'."¹²⁶ When color-blind casting helps Hsiung preserve a positive image of the Chinese, the "Chinese" refer to the national rather than the immigrant subjects. Hsiung's expression of the return to the imaginary Chinese homeland marks a separation from rather than a connection to the Chinese American acting community's resort to establishing transnational and lateral solidarity with this Chinese diasporic writer and stage director in the transatlantic context.

Regardless of the different purposes of writing miscegenation from different perspectives, Lao She and Burke both look at the Chinese presence in London in the

¹²⁶ Letter from "Honorable Wu" to Hsiung, 29 December 1935. Quoted from Diana Yeh, *The Happy Hsiungs*, 59.

early 20th century that reveals a class difference. As Lao She observes, “The Chinese living in London can probably be divided into two classes: workmen and students. The workmen mostly live in East London, in the Chinatown that brings so much ignominy to the name of China” (8). Burke’s Chinamen are the lower-class workmen living in Chinatown, whereas Mr Ma and Ma Wei represent the scholar and business class, whose presence, together with that of the government officials and students, is totally different from the Chinese workmen in Limehouse.¹²⁷ Regardless of this class difference among the Chinese in London, from the late 19th to the early 20th century until 1931, “Chinese population was extremely small, and Chinese presence negligible” (Seed 64). In *LPS*, the relationship between the Princess of the Western Regions and Hsieh Ping-Kuei serves to represent the political relations and moral differences between China and the West. Hsieh, if seen as a diasporic Chinese in London, symbolizes the presence of the elite Chinese in Britain that include diplomats, intellectuals and students.¹²⁸ Hsiung’s ignorance of the class difference in the Chinese community in Britain and his substitution of the upper class for the lower class as the proper representation of the nation suggests an elitist stance in his imagination of China. This nationalist narrative not only prevents Hsiung from establishing a transnational connection to the Chinese American acting communities, but also excludes London’s Limehouse Chinese from the imagination of nation.

¹²⁷ See John Seed, “Limehouse Blues: Looking for ‘Chinatown’ in the London Docks, 1900-1940”: 58-85.

¹²⁸ See Hsiung’s wife Dymia Hsiung’s autobiographical fiction *Flowering Exile* (1952) in its construction of a middle-class Chinese family in Britain, whose Chinese friends circle largely confines to diplomats, intellectuals and students in Britain.

Hsiung in/and China: Spoken Drama and Chinese Modernity

Hsiung's literary effort to represent a desirable equal relationship between China and the West (Japan) in *LPS* in the Anglo-American context, when travelling back to China, received a dramatically different category of reviews. For example, in his 1936 review of *LPS* in the *Guang Ming* magazine, the Chinese playwright Hong Shen criticizes Hsiung for humiliating China because by presenting the plot in which Hsieh Ping-Kuei introduces foreign troops to the Chinese territory, the play retells the history of the Manchus' conquest of China.¹²⁹ Hong Shen's criticism actually expresses a nationalist sentiment against the Manchus similar to that in Hsiung's appropriation of Barrie's *The Admirable Crichton* back in 1929. An article in 1937 in response to Hong Shen's review of *LPS* explains that Hong Shen's critique makes sense in the specific political context in which China is faced with Japan's invasion.¹³⁰ Even though *LPS* and Hsiung's other English works illustrate that Hsiung shares the same patriotic spirit with these two Chinese critics, the ways in which Hsiung presents them to his Anglo-American reader and audience turn out to be unable to justify themselves in the Chinese context. Hong Shen's critique registers a political urgency for the appropriate literary representation of China as political propaganda. This political urgency, however, tends to overestimate Hsiung's Anglo-American audience's familiarity with Chinese history and reality. It also ignores ways in which Chinese self-representation in the West can function as certain forms of resistance in non-Chinese environments. Meanwhile, Hong Shen's critique

¹²⁹ See Hong Shen, "Ruguo de Wangbaochuan" [辱国的王宝川; *Lady Precious Stream*: a humiliation of China], *Guangming*, 1.3 (1936). This is quoted from Yu Hua, "Wangbaocuan Ruguo Wenti" [王宝川辱国问题; On *Lady Precious Stream*'s humiliation of China], *Bentao*, 1.1 (1937): 36-38.

¹³⁰ See Yu Hua, "Wangbaocuan Ruguo Wenti," 36.

undoubtedly demonstrates that modern China is an equally important context as Britain and America in discussing the meaning of diasporic literary expressions.

Recognizing *LPS* as a “bastardized version of Peking Opera” (87), Shen Shuang stresses on the Opera side of the play in its westward circulation from China. Shen argues that Chinese Peking Opera artists such as Mei Lanfang and Western writers such as Brecht and Mayerhold collaborate to translate the Chinese theatre into the language of modernism, only that “they all set Chinese theatre within a symbolic field defined by Western drama ... No sharp distinction can be drawn between high modernists’ interests in Mei Lanfang and Peking Opera in the 1930s and earlier overtly Orientalist appropriations of Chinese theatrical conventions” (101-2). Without denying this argument itself, Shen Shuang does not explain what connection Shih-I Hsiung had with this Peking Opera circle in China and whether and how he participated in the theoretical construction. Prioritizing the Peking Opera origin of the play and its meaning in the Western context leaves unexamined the place of spoken drama and this literary form’s ideological significance for modern China in its search of modernity.

Despite the fact that the adaptations of *LPS* and its productions in Britain and America present a nationalist sentiment and perform a national subject, the paradoxes inherent in the textual adaptations ironically undermine this nationalist claim. This textual paradox reflects Hsiung’s dilemma in his construction of Chinese modernity, which endorses the dilemma of modernity itself. Hsieh Ping-Kui’s road from poverty to fame indicates the multiple sources of power in a cross-cultural context. It is the West (the Western Regions) that empowers Hsieh to represent a social mobility and become a representative of China. But his diasporic status in turn functions to demonstrate the sovereignty of the China proper. The separation

between Hsieh and the Princess at last threatens to leave him powerless and disoriented between the West and China. This textual dilemma demonstrates the paradoxical nature of the Western power over China on the one hand, and the ambiguous status of the diasporic Chinese on the other.

The representation of modern education and revolution in China in *The Bridge of Heaven* illustrates how Western imperialism and modernity can simultaneously play the brighter and darker sides in their encounter with China. The British missionary school that Ta Tung attends prioritizes the subjects of English, Bible and mathematics over Chinese to perform the imbalanced power relations between Britain and China and the superiority mentality of the school's British headmaster Mr Ma. Nevertheless, it is also undeniably true that missionary schools and modern universities in China established by Westerners are important sites that facilitate China's learning from the West. Not only does Ta Tung complete his foreign education in the missionary school to make himself "a man of the world", it is also due to the imbalanced arrangement of the courses that he acquires the opportunity to become a Chinese tutor to ensure his economic independence (162-5). Moreover, foreign concessions in treaty ports that mark the political and economic hegemony of the foreign powers turn into a space that facilitate China's revolutionary course to overthrow the Manchu regime. Europe, America and Japan also become important sources of the financial support for the revolution. Hsiung's textual representation of the relationship between China and the West reveals a historical process that is more complicated than a colonialism versus resistance paradigm, not only in the Anglo-American context, but also in the Chinese context. In the following two sections, I will examine the textual themes in Hsiung's works that make sense in modern China and examine the connections and differences of

interpreting Hsiung's imagination of China in both the Western and the Chinese context.

Gender and Tradition: Female Subjectivity in the Changing Relations between Tradition and Modernity

This section focuses on two aspects of the gender issues in *LPS*. Firstly, the play rewrites the father and daughter's relation through its reinterpretation of the Confucian Classics to deconstruct popular Western representations of the same relation. Secondly, the preservation of the inequality in traditional relations between husband and wife indicates the subjection of the female subjectivity to nation building and political modernity's failure to examine and reform social and moral problems in tradition. I will situate *LPS* in the British context to examine the former issue, and then compare *LPS* with Hsiung's other works to explore why gender inequality is a consistent problem.

The motif of the daughter rebelling against her father in *LPS* may have easily reminded its British audience of the willow-pattern plate narrative, a popular motif shaped and reshaped in the long nineteenth century in Britain's popular imagination of China. It typically portrays the unsuccessful rebellion of a daughter against her strict and authoritative mandarin father in her pursuit of freedom of love. The juxtaposition of the father's moral strictness and the daughter's romance usually repeats political economy's division between China and the West that typically represents the difference between "a European culture imagined as civilized and progressive, and an alien culture seen as primitive and static" (O'Hara 423). This rhetoric about Chinese culture lasts well into the early twentieth century.

Hsiung's representation of the gender relations between father and daughter

in *LPS* intervenes in this normative discourse about traditional Chinese culture and challenges its binary thinking. Representing the same motif in *LPS*, Hsiung's characterization of the father, Prime Minister Wang Yun, distinguishes from the father image in the willow-pattern narrative. The play depicts the Prime Minister as "wearing a long black beard which indicates that he is not the villain of the piece" (1), and situates him within a treacherous relationship to his family: "He is a strict master in his home, which he rules with an iron hand, though his wife says that he should have some one at his elbow. In government he finds that to rule a nation is much easier than to rule a family. That is, no doubt, why we have so many prominent statesmen in history" (1-2). Such a characterization already begins to weaken the political authority of the father by exposing his unstable authority within family, even though this authority is still ostensibly justified by his political prominence. However, the Prime Minister's subsequent failure in preserving his authority both in the family and in politics renders this characterization a biting satire of this authority. The creation of a comic father figure offers to disrupt the stereotypical associations the willow-pattern narrative readily makes between an authoritative mandarin father and the strictness of the Chinese morality.

Along with the characterization of a comic father figure, Hsiung portrays the daughter, Precious Stream, as self-consciously and capably defending her freedom and independence against her father. This is most explicitly reflected in his multiple adaptations of the plot in Act One. In the original play, even though Precious Stream also rebels against her father, this rebellion derives from a commitment to her husband Hsieh, which incarnates the same patriarchal authority and traditional morality to which Precious Stream only passively adheres. In Hsiung's play, however, he introduces "love-interest" and a feminist consciousness. Precious Stream chooses

the beggar and gardener Hsieh because she appreciates him being “a man of both high literary and military abilities” (26). She parodies her father’s appropriation of “the will of God” to effectively ridicule the hypocritical and self-contradictory nature of appealing to the patriarchal tradition for the justification of father authority. At times Hsiung makes Precious Stream directly utter her feminist stance. For example, she tells Hsieh to kneel down to her mother, Madam Wang, before they depart for their own cave home in order to “show that you [Hsieh] hold the female sex in higher esteem” (47). When Madam Wang tries to persuade her to return home from the cave, she claims that “I am too proud to lower my flag of independence” (72).

By writing love-interest and feminist consciousness into *Lady Precious Stream*, and by proclaiming the play as a faithful translation of the original Chinese play, Hsiung re-establishes these themes as the proper motives in traditional Chinese literature, thus breaking the dichotomy between European content and Chinese setting, between humanitarianism and morality, and showing Chinese culture as liberal and progressive. Contemporary reviews of both the play and its performance in Britain acknowledge this universality and humanity presented in the play to belong to traditional Chinese literature, without associating this universality with primitivism, as *The Yellow Jacket* did.¹³¹ *Lady Precious Stream* thus further provides an opportunity to redefine modernity not as an impenetrable boundary between the West and China, but as the reinterpretation of tradition itself. Both Precious Stream and the Prime Minister Wang resort to Confucian teachings for their authority. Whereas the father establishes his authority over the daughter by referring to the moral teaching “To obey your father when young, to obey your husband when married, and to obey your children when a mother” (5), the daughter justifies her

¹³¹ See “‘Lady Precious Stream’: Little Theatre Production.” *Manchester Guardian*, 29 Nov. 1934: 10; and Richard Denis Charques, “A Chinese Play.” *Times Literary Supplement*, 12 Jul. 1934: 489.

rebellion by quoting from Confucius: “Not to impose upon others your own opinions” (6). The growing feminist awareness in modern China thus gains its legitimacy through tradition; meanwhile, the reinterpretation of tradition gives tradition its modern dimension. Moreover, the sources of these traditional teachings also indicate the power relations between father and daughter. When Precious Stream quotes directly from Confucius himself, what the Prime Minister capitalizes on belongs to the moral dogma that Confucianist scholars constructed to establish patriarchal authority. Precious Stream’s reinterpretation of the Confucian teaching to defend freedom of marriage deconstructs the patriarchal appropriation of Confucius to redefine what female virtues are. Consequently, the Confucian tradition presents a different dimension that is not stereotypically conservative or patriarchal.

In consequence, on the representational level, Hsiung’s effort to construct a Chinese modernity by rewriting the gender relations between father and daughter serves to resist Western appropriations of traditional Chinese culture as the opposite of modernity. What we need to further query is what are the sources of Hsiung’s recognition of what is modernity or from where he borrows this thematic and ideological construction of Chinese modernity? How do his works show his similarity and difference from these sources and why? To answer these questions, we need to leave alone for a while *LPS*’s dialogues with Western representations of China and move back to the modern Chinese literary context in the early 20th century.

The theme of freedom of marriage and generational confrontation in *LPS* is a common one in modern Chinese drama, mainly developing itself since the May Fourth Movement in 1919. Two of the earliest compositions, Hu Shi’s *The Main Event in Life* in 1919 and Tian Han’s *The Night the Tiger Was Caught* in 1921, help to shape the thematic and ideological paradigm for modern Chinese literature and

drama.¹³² This thematic choice also reveals China's appropriation of Ibsen and the image of Nora. Hu Shi is one of the earliest Chinese to introduce Ibsen to China and to translate his plays into Chinese by devoting a special issue on Ibsen to the *New Youth* magazine in 1917. Even though there are differences between urban and rural settings and between classes, both plays depict the generational confrontation between father and daughter in the latter's pursuit of freedom of love. The older generation, especially the patriarchal authority, represents the tradition which is constructed as the opposition to modernity and progress. Differing from Nora's individualist claim against the husband, Chinese "Noras" strive for the freedom of marriage against their parents, and the male lovers are usually complicit in their rebellion against tradition. *LPS* conforms to this May Fourth paradigm by challenging the patriarchal order the father figure represents. However, Hsiung also makes a necessary distinction between this patriarchal order and the Confucian classics, as has been discussed earlier. When modern women such as Precious Stream appropriate traditional cultural materials to justify their pursuit of independence, traditional culture begins to function as one important source of Chinese modernity. Precious Stream's individualist claim relies on her victory over Wang Yun in competing for the discursive power to reinterpret the Confucian tradition. Inheriting from the May Fourth thematic paradigm, Hsiung simultaneously breaks from the binary opposition between tradition and modernity.

The female individualism within the relations between father and daughter in *LPS* fails to represent itself in the relations between husband and wife. Hsieh Ping-Kuei's testing of Precious Stream's virtue upon returning to her after 18 years' absence demonstrates an inequality in the gender relations. Here is how Hsieh speaks

¹³² See Hu Shi. *The Main Event in Life*, 31-39; Tian Han. *The Night the Tiger Was Caught*, 40-57.

of his psychological activity with a soliloquy:

Wait a moment. I was married to her only for a month and have been absent from home for eighteen years. I don't know what kind of woman she really is. Let me try to flirt with her. If she proves to be a good and virtuous woman I'll tell her who I am, and we will be happily reunited. If she proves to be a woman of easy virtue I'll disown her and go back to the Royal Princess of the Western Regions. I know that many ancient worthies tested the virtue of their own wives, so why shouldn't I? (Hsiung, *LPS* 108-9)

Hsieh's imitation of the ancient worthies serves to justify his moral superiority. His unexamined reception of this moral tradition underscores the conservative gender morality in this patriarchal tradition. When Hsiung preserves this plot from the original play and portrays Hsieh Ping-Kuei as a modern worthy modelled on his ancient predecessors, *LPS* legitimizes this unequal moral relationship between husband and wife as an integral part of his construction of Chinese modernity, which ironically degrades Precious Stream's feminist claim in the play and undermines Precious Stream's subjectivity in her appropriation of tradition.

In direct contrast to Hsiung's preservation of this unequal husband-wife relationship, the Chinese writer Eileen Chang presents her female perspective in its critique of this relationship in her article "Seeing Peking Opera from a Foreigner's Perspective and Others" (1943). Chang relentlessly attacks the gender inequality presented in the play from a feminist point of view:

The Stallion with the Red Mane [translation of the title of the Peking Opera] meticulously portrays men's selfishness. For 18 years, Hsieh Ping-Kuei dedicates himself to his career in the Western Regions, unabashedly

abandoning his wife [Precious Stream], who lives alone in their bleak cave home, as a frozen fish forgot in the fridge. One day, he is suddenly caught by guilt and travels back home day and night to reunite with his wife, fancying that the happiness of reunion and the glory of being a queen may compensate for her lost 18 years. Ironically enough, she has wasted the best years of her life to struggle against poverty and loneliness as a social deviant. He never bothers to think for her what it means to be a queen in the Western Regions, in the territory of a young and powerful concubine, the Princess of the Western Regions! No wonder she dies only after 18 days since she was enthroned as the queen: worldly glory does not bring her true happiness. However, as inconsiderate as Hsieh Ping-Kuei is, he is still portrayed as a good character. Peking Opera is popular because of its ambivalent moral attitude.¹³³

Chang pointedly discloses the social and moral mechanisms behind the representation of gender inequality. Within traditional morality, disrespecting parental authority, refusing arranged marriage and later becoming a “widow” earn Precious Stream the label as a “social deviant”. Moral condemnation is accompanied by social isolation and economic precariousness. Worse still, men and women in similar situations face drastically different social judgment. Being individuals, Hsieh enjoys the privilege to work and to realize an upward social mobility, whereas Precious Stream does not have access to social resources and has to live in poverty; Hsieh develops a romantic relationship with the Princess of the Western Regions (a definite relationship in the original play but an ambivalent one in *LPS*, which I will

¹³³ Chang, Eileen [张爱玲]. “Yangren Kan Jingxi Ji Qita” [洋人看京戏及其他; Seeing Peking Opera from a Foreigner’s Perspective and Others]. *Gujin*, 33 (November 1943). The translation is mine.

later discuss in detail), whereas Precious Stream lives as a widow who must keep her fidelity to a lost or diseased husband. Criticizing this gender imbalance in the representation of Chinese tradition, Chang simultaneously satirizes the morality of the general public in her own time, whose indulgence in these Peking Opera shows and whose unexamined attitude towards these shows' representation of traditional morality speak of a largely unchanged social and moral condition in China in the 1940s. Chang's criticism of the gender inequality in the social and moral realms resembles Lu Xun's earlier examination of China's appropriation of the Nora-motif. In his 1923 speech at the Beijing Women's Higher Teachers' College on "What Happens after Nora Leaves Home?" Lu Xun proposes a gloomy prospect for women who leave home, predicting that they either return home or turn into prostitutes due to financial difficulties. This prediction reflects Lu Xun's criticism of a male-dominated social and economic order that was morally gender-biased. Lu Xun further illustrates his argument through his short story "Regret of the Past" (1925). It is narrated by a first-person male voice, who examines the failure of a young couple to maintain their married life after leaving their parents' home. The male narrator reveals the financial difficulty and the moral condemnation of free love he and his wife have to confront. He regrets having proposed a divorce which leads to her returning her father's home and her subsequent death. The husband's regret of his selfishness discloses the imbalanced gender relations between the young couple and the moral intolerance for women on a larger social scale.

Hsiung does not show a similar degree of criticality as both Eileen Chang and Lu Xun do. Even though Hsiung is not unaware of the gender imbalance presented in the original play where Hsieh Ping-Kuei marries both Precious Stream and the Princess and changes the ending to suit the monogamy required by China's law after

the 1911 revolution, Hsiung's appealing to the 1911 law for the representation of the gender relations in 1934 seems anachronistic. Legal justification for social and moral problems speaks more of Hsiung's eagerness to represent a positive image of the nation than of his examination of the moral dilemma within the abstract form of tradition and nation. Hsiung's preservation of this troubled gender relation, just as his adaptation in other parts of the plot, results from his choice and therefore approval of it. In his Chinese play *Money God* (1932), Hsiung satirizes a middle-class couple's moral emptiness in their married life, which is built upon free love. From this beginning of his dramatic composition, Hsiung's attention to marriage speaks more of his intention to restore a moral order for family life than of examining the gender inequality in the relationship between husband and wife. This pattern of gender relations not only manifests itself in *LPS* as the sacrifice of female subjectivity to a husband that symbolizes the nation, it reappears in Hsiung's later works as well. For example, in *Professor from Peking*, Hsiung constructs Mrs Chang as a Chinese Nora leaving home. Suspicious of his husband in abandoning his political loyalty to the Nationalist Party and the revolutionary course, Mrs Chang cries out to her husband before leaving home, "I tried my best to understand you, to comfort you, and to encourage you! I worked and worked; I sacrificed everything for you! Did I get anything in return? Nothing!" (39). By the end of the play, however, Mrs Chang returns home and sacrifices her life to save her husband, because she realizes that she had misunderstood him—his armament proposal to resist Japan's invasion proves his loyalty to the party and the nation. Here, the same pattern of reunion between the couple performs an abstract national subject. Women's voice is reduced to political propaganda and women's subjectivity is succumbed to the party and national will that is predominantly patriarchal.

Similarly, in *The Bridge of Heaven*, Hsiung constructs the relationship between Ta Tung and Lotus Fragrance in his representation of tradition and modernity. Structurally speaking, the first half of the novel resembles a pamphlet introducing various traditional customs in China's village life, whereas the latter half serves to retell the history of political reforms and revolutions in late Qing China from a revolutionary's point of view. The novel is narrated in such a way as to reveal that traditional customs and revolutionary struggles for modernity simultaneously represent authenticity of China. However, the novel is not clear about how these two aspects coexist in a modern environment. The disillusionment in the nominal success of the 1911 revolution in China at the end of the novel also discloses political modernity's failure in challenging and reforming the social and moral problems in tradition. Political struggles in the novel leave the traditional morality that is inherent in traditional customs unexamined and untouched. Therefore, the novel's representation of the relationship between tradition and modernity keeps ambivalent, just as Hsiung's introduction of the 1911 law into *LPS* does not eradicate the gender imbalance between Precious Stream and Hsieh Ping-Kuei, because both the law and the characterization of Hsieh perform the nation, whose political construction inherits the patriarchal order unexamined.

With regard to the discussion of the relationship between modernity and tradition in dramatic form, Hong Shen's *The Wedded Husband* (1919) is in many ways comparable to *LPS*. The play was written and performed during Hong Shen's study at the Ohio State University. Miss Wang has to unwillingly agree to an arranged marriage by her father at the price of forsaking her free love with another man. On the wedding night her fiancé sacrifices his life to save Miss Wang from plague, which illustrates his notion of love. Upon knowing the truth and being

moved by love, Miss Wang determines to return this love by staying in this unconsummated marriage and becoming the widow of the diseased husband, ignorant of her father's plan to marry her off to another man. As Man He argues, the play "presents a version of female empowerment quite at odds with the Nora-inspired plays of the 1920s" (73). While Noras acquire female independence through leaving home, family and tradition, Miss Wang gains her female subjectivity through staying within family. The insistence on love within the traditional betrothal by both Miss Wang and her fiancé illustrates Hong Shen's aspiration "to reach an even higher-scale 'reunion' between Chinese sentimentalism (*qing*, loyalty and filial piety) and the enlightenment values of rationality and subjectivity" (74). Consequently, Hong Shen's play performs a "boundary transgression" (74) not only across the binary opposition between tradition and modernity, between China and the West, but also across that between the radical and the conservative discourses of criticism. In comparison, the adaptation of the ending of *LPS* speaks of Hsiung's choice of the traditional family relations for Precious Stream over the absolute individualist feminist claim by the Princess as a Western female. The ambivalent ending of the play in which the Princess is left with the Minister and possibly returns to the Western Regions alone presents a female image that is more independent from a male counterpart, as Nora's individualist appeal does; whereas Precious Stream waits for 18 years to return to family, despite the gender inequality between her and her husband. The juxtaposition of the Princess as the Western/British and Precious Stream as Chinese showcases a suppressed Chinese female subjectivity within the traditional familial and patriarchal morality. Moreover, the performances of the two plays in the American context also reveal their different politics of representation. While *LPS* includes a Chinese actress into the otherwise all-white cast to act a role

peculiar to traditional Chinese drama and presents a national subject, *The Wedded Husband's* employment of five male Chinese students and two female American students in its 1919 production takes a move “that boldly challenges performance traditions in... America (where Asian characters were depicted by white actors in yellowface)” (Man 57). This casting decision also provides a site to perform miscegenation between Chinese men and white women that more pertinently represents the racial politics in the United States.

Knowledge, Class, and Nation

In the representation of class, traditional culture also plays a key role in destabilizing the existing social class distinction. Hsieh Ping-Kuei's rise from gardener to king displays the possibility of social mobility. His talent to write poetry enables such a social transformation. His possession of poetry (knowledge) enables him to be a gentleman disguised as a labourer. Poetry, as are the Confucian classics, establishes itself as the symbol of power in Hsiung's construction of Chinese modernity.

As a matter of fact, this class discourse that concerns the relationship between the aristocrats and the labourers and the idea of knowledge as the symbol of power to threaten the existing class order are both rhetorical devices that the British playwright James Barrie had employed in his play *The Admirable Crichton* (1902). Shih-I Hsiung is the play's first Chinese translator. His translation of the play was serialized in the Chinese literary magazine *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (*Fiction Monthly*) in 1929.¹³⁴ As Marty Gould very well argues, text performs social power in Barrie's

¹³⁴ Hsiung, *Kejing de Kelaideng* [可敬的克莱登; *The Admirable Crichton*]. *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (*Fiction Monthly*), 12. 3 (1929): 509-26; 12. 4 (1929): 701-14; 12.5 (1929): 857-71; 12. 6 (1929): 1007-18.

play. Books and newspapers appear as the symbol of social status throughout the play. In Lord Loam's house in London, it is the Lord and his daughter Lady Mary who enjoy the privilege to read newspapers or books; in the deserted island where the class order is reversed, it is Crichton who possesses the only book on the island. Gould concludes that "Crichton's metamorphosis into a figure of authority occurs linguistically, the control of language and the possession of text being the two indispensable items in the performance of power" (148). In comparing Barrie and Hsiung in their employment of knowledge as the symbol of power, what is noteworthy is that whereas books and newspapers in *The Admirable Crichton* are representing knowledge in a general sense and do not have specific references, in *LPS* knowledge refers exclusively to the Confucian classics and Chinese poetry. They serve to justify Precious Stream's individualist claim and Hsieh's class and social transformation. Thus, in a cross-cultural context where Hsiung represents a Chinese identity to a Western audience, traditional Chinese culture is necessarily raised to prominence to perform as one source of Chinese modernity. It offers not only to resist the Western construction of a primitive China, but also disrupts the anti-traditionalist May Fourth paradigm in China. The cross-cultural context provides Hsiung with a space to rethink the value of tradition and to change his rhetorical methods accordingly. The establishment of traditional Chinese culture as a symbol of power expresses a nationalist sentiment. Situated in an era of colonial realities and colonialist ideologies, particularly with Japan's actual threat to China, Hsiung's insistence on tradition represents one of the variations of China's nationalist resistance.

In his comment on *The Admirable Crichton*, Hsiung explains to his Chinese reader that "the aim of this play is to propagate the revolution for the people's rights

and to encourage the oppressed classes to rebel against the ruling aristocracy.”¹³⁵ This “misreading” of Barrie translates Barrie’s subtle manoeuvre of the tension between social classes in Britain into a distinct revolutionary rhetoric in early Republican China that caters to the mainstream discourse of a nationalist sentiment against the Manchu regime in the late Qing Dynasty. However, when Hsiung represents similar class issues in *LPS* for a British audience, his use of “labourer” and “gentleman” restores Barrie’s class rhetoric for a British condition. In his 1936 book review of *LPS*, Lin Yutang notices the play’s tone of class distinction: “the tone is so typically English that we might believe it to be any one of the English lords and ladies protesting against the marriage of his or her daughter to a commoner” (108). Compared to *The Admirable Crichton*, *LPS* also tones down the tension between classes and the dangerous connotation of social transformation. Lin Yutang thus depicts Hsieh Ping-Kuei’s function: “His characteristic rise from poverty to power provides an excellent theme for satires on the human heart and human snobbery” (107). The substitution of the universal “human snobbery” for the systemic inequality of class division to be the object of criticism suggests the different strategies Barrie and Hsiung employ. Unlike Tian Han’s realistic representation of the lower-class male protagonist’s inability to gain access to any form of knowledge or power, nor resembling Barrie’s challenge of the legitimacy of Britain’s class division, Hsieh in *LPS* is not performing class difference in either the Chinese or the British context. The social mobility Hsieh represents aims to perform a modern China that unites both the upper and the lower classes. But like his representation of gender relations, in his construction of the class rhetoric to resist imperialist and orientalist discourses about China, Hsiung’s imagination of nation marks an elitist

¹³⁵ See Hsiung’s comment on *The Admirable Crichton*, *Xiaoshuo Yuebao* (Fiction Monthly), 12. 3 (1929): 526-7. The translation is mine.

assimilation and occupation of lower-class subjectivity.

We can also examine the *Money God* to further elaborate how Hsiung changes his rhetoric strategies in representing gender and class relations in *LPS* in order to perform nation. *Money God* is a melodrama aiming at a social satire on the worship of money and the substitution of money for morality in social relations. Hsiung creates two pairs of husband and wife. The upper-class pair demonstrate a disillusionment of freedom of love and marriage whereas the poorer pair reveal a total substitution of money as morality. As the title of the play suggests, money becomes the object of worship for people of both upper and lower classes. Hsiung's satire on the corrupting force of money and capital suggests a local resistance to capitalism in China, which constitutes the other object of criticism in the May Fourth paradigm. Even though the representation of the same motif of the freedom of marriage and social mobility is totally reversed in *LPS*, the same discourse of resistance remains largely unchanged.

This strategy of nation building, namely, the male protagonist possessing the power of knowledge that enables him to trespass social and class division and symbolizing a united nation, lasts throughout Hsiung's English compositions. For example, the symbol of knowledge takes a more conspicuous political form in *The Professor from Peking*. In the beginning scene of the play, Hsiung reiterates the class rhetoric he has used in *LPS* to describe Professor Chang's initial wretchedness, "A respectable labourer's abode would be much better and tidier than this wretched hole [the Professor's house]" (3). However, just as Hsieh's possession of the talent of writing poetry breaks for him the boundary between labourer and gentleman, the book functions similarly for Professor Chang to grow from poverty to power and to ultimately trespass the ideological boundary between the Nationalist and the

Communist parties for a politically united China to resist Japan's invasion. Hsiung thus stresses Professor Chang's possession of books. "Not only the tables, chairs and bed are crowded with books, but also the ground is dotted here and there with strayed ones. This clearly shows the occupant is a regular bookworm" (3). The image of book repeats the trope that knowledge is power when Professor Chang makes the armament proposal to the central government for fighting against Japan. Mrs Chang celebrates the proposal by saying to her husband that "Your armament proposal is marvellous. And the two points, Unconditional unification [between the Nationalist and Communist parties] and resistance [to Japan] to the last! These proposals will save China!" (160) The power of writing acquires unmistakable political significance and Professor Chang's possession of this power makes him the symbol of nation.

In *The Bridge of Heaven*, what constitutes the legitimate or orthodox knowledge for the male protagonist Ta Tung as "a man of the world" (67) re-establishes the power relations between China and the West Hsiung attempts to represent in *LPS*. Ta Tung, originating from the Confucian concept of the great harmony, has to learn the Four Books of the Confucian classics on the one hand, and the modern subjects which include geography, English and mathematics on the other. Ta Tung's learning suggests the two legitimate sources of Chinese modernity. It is also this possession of these knowledge that Ta Tung is capable of transforming from his low birth—he is bought from the lowest class in the village—to the leader of China's revolution. This social and class transformation subsequently makes him the symbol of the nation. With this symbolic representation, the issue of Ta Tung's ownership also acquires a symbolic significance. The motif of choosing between ownership by virtue and by natural right appears around the same time in Brecht's *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1944), where Grusia's virtue and Azdak's judgement

perform Brecht's imagining of a socialist virtue which sticks to the principle "That what there is shall go to those who are good for it" (99) and speaks of the role the working people and the intellectuals play respectively. In Hsiung's novel, it is clearly indicated that Ta Tung's politically progressive uncle represents virtue, whereas Ta Tung's father, who owns Ta Tung through purchase, represents the "natural" right. It is how the choice is made that reveals how Hsiung differs from Brecht in the representation of class. Hsiung settles the issue through an appropriation of the "public opinion", namely, "the judgment of the whole village" (Hsiung, *The Bridge* 96). However, it turns out that the omnipotent third-person narrator ridicules the bigotry and selfishness of the villagers by having Ta Tung's uncle manipulate their opinion in such an anti-climax when the villagers turn to support Ta Tung's father:

My venerable elders and my beloved brothers! If you leave the matter unsettled like this, I am afraid each of you will have to settle his own account with the teashop keeper. For, if you think my brother is not in the wrong, nobody is going to pay the bill. I am not in the wrong, and you don't suppose I'm going to pay it, do you? (98)

This appropriation of the "public opinion" indicates an elitist sympathy for the educated and the political progressive to perform nation, in which lower classes are actually underrepresented. From *LPS* to *Professor from Peking* and to *The Bridge of Heaven*, Hsiung repeats his appropriation of this class rhetoric as a strategy to represent the male protagonists as the elite leaders of the nation.

Conclusion

Shih-I Hsiung's transnational travel and *LPS*'s global production, circulation and reception require us to examine the contact zones between China and the West

beyond the scope of colonialist binaries. Shen Shuang thus concludes her examination of Hsiung and *LPS*:

Hsiung's intention to construct a new image of modern Chineseness through this play urges us to interpret it in the context of another tradition--the history of modernist cosmopolitanism in twentieth-century China ... cosmopolitan Chinese artists were in many cases not psychologically guarded against or politically antagonistic to existing Orientalist modes of representing Chineseness. In other words, *LPS* embodies a kind of political impurity that is explicable only in the context of the semi-colonial modernity of Republican China. (87-8)

Hsiung was influenced by the iconoclastic antitraditionalism of the May Fourth New Culture, which had become the dominant ideology in China after 1919; however, he did not follow the dictums of the New Culture all the way through. Recognizing the commercial value of indigenous Chinese culture in the global market, Hsiung differed from most New Culturalists in his willingness to capitalize on Peking Opera as an iconic symbol of Chineseness. (96)

I agree with Shen Shuang's employment of the "semi-colonial modernity" to refer to the discursive power imbalance between China and the West. I equally agree with her in pointing out the historical contingency of the Western appropriation of Peking Opera as a modernist form and the fact that subsequent commercial consumptions of this form deviate from the creativity of its initial aesthetic construction. However, formal appropriation of Peking Opera is far from being the only form of Western appropriations of traditional Chinese culture, and is only one of the aspects from which we can interpret *LPS* in the cross-cultural context.

Moreover, it is also necessary to historically examine how *LPS* connects to other representations and discourses in its production and circulation in specific contexts, both in China and Britain.

Firstly, we need to reconstruct Britain as the contact zone in which Hsiung represents China by asking whether Western modes of representing Chineseness or Western appropriations of traditional Chinese culture, including Peking Opera, necessarily speak for a political imbalance of power. Western appropriations of traditional Chinese culture are far from being homogeneous. Other than the more obviously reductive and racist Orientalist discourses, British appropriations of traditional Chinese culture range from the more popular adaptations of traditional Chinese drama and popular fancy for Chinese objects, to more serious translations and interpretations of traditional Chinese art, literature and philosophy. Even though their interests in China are invariably confined to the traditional rather than the contemporary, this image of traditional China is appropriated for different purposes and reinterpreted in ways far more diverse than the Orientalist discourse of backwardness or savagery. As David Porter suggests, early twentieth-century modernist Chinoiserie in Britain differs from the eighteenth and nineteenth-century representations of China because the social mechanisms behind this representation were in constant change.¹³⁶ Although Porter is referring to the temporal change, it stands equally true that within the same social and temporal space, different cultural mechanisms lie behind similar representations. More importantly, it was this diversity that provided a cultural space in Britain for the popularity of *LPS*. In consequence, what really matters is in what aspects Hsiung's self-representation resembles or differs from the various British discourses of China, and what are the

¹³⁶ David Porter, "China and the Formation of the Modernist Aesthetic Ideal," 18-36.

social and cultural mechanisms behind Hsiung's representation that distinguish him as a Chinese diasporic writer.

Secondly, the argument that Hsiung fails to challenge Orientalist discourses preconceives that they are not only homogeneous but also homogeneously negative. The problem with this preconception is that neither British appropriations of traditional Chinese culture nor Hsiung's representation in *LPS* was necessarily referring to Chinese tradition as being negative or primitive. With regard to the play, we should examine its reference to Chinese tradition(s). Tradition manifests itself as the Peking Opera form in its performance, including the stage setting, costumes and make-up, etc.; as the idyllic and poetic imagery of life in its description of the scenery and in illustrations; and also as the Confucian morality of family and gender relations. What I would like to ask is when does Hsiung capitalize on British imaginings of traditional China and when he intervenes with an original interpretation of tradition; whether there is tension between form and content, between the commercial and ideological aspects of the play; how Hsiung appropriates tradition as an integral part of his scheme for China's modernity and whether this scheme is original or problematic.

Thirdly, Shen Shuang's definition of Chinese cosmopolitanism misrepresents it as a monotonous historical existence and denies the constructive power in its employment of tradition as sites of resistance to imperialism. In his Foreword to the initial issue of the *T'ien Hsia Monthly* (T'ian Hsia meaning universe in Chinese) in August 1935, Sun Fo explains why the aim of the journal is to do a cultural interpretation of China to the West:

With modern industrialization, economic contacts have become the rule, and we know what they have meant in the past and what they will mean in the

future, if we are not careful: they constitute the main cause of the Great War, and are at the back of the present dangerous urge towards economic nationalism.¹³⁷

Sun's pursuit of cultural understanding as a means to resist Western political and economic nationalism in the 1930s bears certain resemblance to Bruce Robbins's proposal for cosmopolitanism to resist America's hegemonic global power in the 21st century, although within the realm of culture, equally power imbalance exists on a global scale and we need to examine specifically where and how a cultural production announces its resistance to what kind of cultural and discursive inequality.¹³⁸ Shih-I Hsiung's representations of China show partial resistance to certain Western stereotypes of China. Nevertheless, his reconfiguration of gender and class relations refers ultimately to the construction of a nation that is simultaneously gender and class-biased. The commercial success of *LPS* in Britain facilitates the circulation of Hsiung's representation of China in the West, but the consumption of the Peking Opera form also threatens to undermine the thematic and ideological message the play expresses. Hsiung's relations with the marketability of traditional Chinese culture in Britain simultaneously empowers him to gain certain level of discursive power to represent China in the West and incurs resistance to this power from Hsiung's Chinese critics. Situating within this cross-cultural context as a diasporic Chinese writer, Hsiung in many ways resembles his characterization of Hsieh Ping-Kuei in his ambivalent position within the relationship between Western imperialism and modernity and between Chinese tradition and modernity.

¹³⁷ Sun, Fo, Foreword. *T'ien Hsia Monthly*, 1.1 (August 1935): 3-5.

¹³⁸ Bruce Robbins, *Perpetual War: Cosmopolitanism from the Viewpoint of Violence*.

Conclusion: Early Twentieth Century Reimagined in the Twenty-First Century

Key figures, texts and spaces which played important roles in connecting China to the English world in the early twentieth century frequently reappear in twenty-first century's literary productions about East-West relations. Rediscovery and reinterpretation of them often participate in seeking for transnational connections, an effort that links the past to the present and implies the presence of familiar conditions of inequality and familiar tropes to combat injustice. For example, the British Chinese community reconstructs Shih-I Hsiung as the earliest literary self-articulation by the Chinese in Britain. Through scholarly studies of Hsiung and theatrical reproduction of *Lady Precious Stream*,¹³⁹ they actively present Hsiung as a cultural icon of the British Chinese who contribute to the formation of ethnic minority's identity in a multi-ethnic British context today. Adaptations of traditional Chinese theatre, including but not limited to *Lady Precious Stream*, become an important approach for the British Chinese community to renegotiate ethnic relations. The 2012 controversy over the Royal Shakespeare Company's [hereafter referred to as the RSC] production of *The Orphan of Zhao* and British East Asian community's response to it are a good illustration of this negotiation process.

Writing and Performing China in the RSC Controversy

The RSC's reproduction of *The Orphan of Zhao* is based on the British poet James Fenton's adaptation, which was published by Faber and Faber earlier in 2012. The play was performed in the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon from November 2012 to March 2013. Fenton was specially commissioned by this

¹³⁹ For example, Diana Ye's biography *The Happy Hsiungs: Performing China and the Struggle for Modernity*, and the Moongate production of *Lady Precious Stream* in 2015.

production's director Gregory Doran to write the play for its RSC production. This production caused a social controversy over the RSC's so-called colour-blind casting. British East Asian actors protested that the East Asian community was seriously underrepresented and, worse, misrepresented: only 3 out of 17 members of the cast were of East Asian origin, and they were given the role of the dog, the maid, and the ghost. East Asian actors were alarmed not only because they were "minor" roles in the play but also due to the racist, or stereotypical at best, images usually associated with the East Asian community. The RSC's Facebook and Twitter pages provided an online social space for the British East Asian community's immediate reactions to RSC's casting decision. Academic debates over the controversy followed. For example, the *Contemporary Theatre Review* devoted a special issue in 2014, which was titled "A Controversial Company: Debating the Casting of the RSC's *The Orphan of Zhao*", to the discussion of Britain's cultural mechanism as the background of this controversy.

Reactions to the RSC's casting strategy demonstrates that representations of China and the Chinese still matter to Britain, but in a way that also differs from the early twentieth century. The RSC's adaptation of *The Orphan of Zhao* resembles *The Circle of Chalk's* translation and reinterpretation in the European context in the 1920s. They demonstrate a similar process in which Western modernity establishes itself by perpetuating the image of China as the ancient other in opposition to modernity.¹⁴⁰ In a limited sense, Shih-I Hsiung succeeded in presenting *Lady Precious Stream* to Britain (and America) as a literary representation of Chinese

¹⁴⁰ I will prove this later in detail with a close reading of Fenton's textual adaptation and the RSC's publication strategy. The controversy almost unanimously focuses on the casting issue. I want to demonstrate the importance of reading the ideology of textual adaptations to the casting issue. It helps identify the difference as well as the connection between history and the present. It also contributes to our rethinking of the notion of transnationalism and identity making

modernity against the hegemonic and Orientalist representation of China and the Chinese in the West in the 1930s. Hsiung's self-representation encoded a renewed perception of the racial and international relations between the West and China. His imagination of China never failed to signify a political and cultural origin. In the historical context of the 1930s and 1940s, this nationalist representation of China provided an effective counter-narrative to imperialism, although simultaneously at the cost of obscuring the presence of lower-class Limehouse Chinese in his imagination of China and leaving this group of Chinese twice marginalized, both in the British representations of the Chinese and in the Chinese diasporic imagination of their identity. By contrast, the British East Asian community's protest against the RSC illustrates the process in which self-identification as Chinese (or East Asian) takes on a growing ethnic rather than racial dimension. As Stuart Hall argues in his definition of the cultural identity of the diaspora in post-colonial Britain:

Cultural identity... is a matter of "becoming" as well as of "being". It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere "recovery" of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. (225)

Debates over the RSC production of *The Orphan of Zhao* exclusively focus on its so-called colour-blind casting in view of the fact that the “major” and the majority of the roles are played by white actors in a “Chinese” play, critiquing the RSC for downplaying Britain’s ethnic diversity. However, apart from the casting issue and the power politics of representation in performance, seldom has any criticism done a close reading of Fenton’s play to examine the relationship between text and performance. The original plot is a revenge story. Cheng Ying sacrifices his own baby in order to save the life of the orphan of the Zhao family. When the orphan grows into an adult and knows from Cheng Ying that his current stepfather is the butcher of the entire Zhao clan, he avenges the death of the Zhao family. The play expresses the theme of loyal sacrifice. Fenton claims to have referred to various versions of the story, including previous Western adaptations of the play. But he largely bases his adaptation on the storyline of the Yuan drama version by Ji Junxiang in the thirteenth century.¹⁴¹

In contrast to the original narrative, Fenton’s adaptation creates a new scene at the end of the play, which features a dialogue between Cheng Ying and the ghost of his sacrificed son. The ghost blames his father’s choice, while Cheng Ying, in his remorse, commits suicide. Fenton’s invention of this scene creates an anti-climax and challenges the patriarchy and authoritarianism in the original drama’s theme of loyal sacrifice. Recovering the lost voice of the sacrificed child also reveals a postmodern consciousness to reconstruct alternative histories and suppressed history narratives.¹⁴² With this reconfiguration of the father-son relations, the RSC’s casting

¹⁴¹ For an English introduction and translation of the Yuan drama to which Fenton refers, see Stephen West and Wilt Idema, *The Orphan of Zhao and Other Yuan Plays*, 1-111.

¹⁴² One more thing worth noting is that this background helps us to understand the ideological assumption behind Fenton’s adaptation. See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, “Interview with the RSC’s Hannah Miller, Head of Casting, and Kevin Fitzmaurice, Producer”, 490-1.

of the Japanese British actor Chris Lew Kum Hoi as the ghost bears a symbolic meaning. Protests against the casting of one of the three East Asian actors as the ghost/sacrificed baby are wary of the ready association of East Asians with baby, which bears the primitive and immature undertone in orientalist discourses. Reading the textual significance of the baby in Fenton's adaptation along with the casting decision can at least tell us that the RSC is very likely to cast a East Asian actor as the ghost to symbolize the discovery of the lost voice of Britain's East Asian community. As Hannah Miller, RSC's Head of Casting, spoke of the RSC's intention in producing *The Orphan of Zhao*, "We wanted to expose a contemporary British audience to a story that they perhaps would never have known, and explore another culture and its classic stories... We wanted to continue to explore a rich history that a lot of British people know nothing about and to explore it in the context of a multicultural Britain".¹⁴³

This is a gesture to represent Britain's ethnic diversity by an established and public cultural institution. Before moving to the East Asian community's protest that leads the controversy to the direction of authentic representation of ethnic diversity, I need to further explore the textual adaptation's ideological connotation, which reveals a different but related form of inequality.

In his interview with the RSC, Fenton explains the Chinese play's difference from and connection to Shakespeare. He claims that:

Then there are certain things in the original that we could see would be very difficult for a western audience. I began to see that the right thing to do was not to tone down the original, but to make that problem a feature of the play. For instance, the life of one child is sacrificed to save the life of another,

¹⁴³ See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "Interview with the RSC's Hannah Miller, Head of Casting, and Kevin Fitzmaurice, Producer," 492.

and it is very hard to convince a western audience of that argument. So you have to leave the ambiguity and difficulty there in the play....

In terms of it being referred to as the Chinese Hamlet, that's partly because it's China's most famous play and partly because it's a revenge play. And there's a ghost that comes in to remind one of the protagonists that there's this issue unresolved, so that's a parallel.¹⁴⁴

To understand Fenton's definition of similarity and difference, we need to restore the context in which the RSC commissioned him to adapt the play. *The Orphan of Zhao* is one of the three non-Shakespeare plays the RSC reproduced in 2012 for the *A World Elsewhere* season, the other two being Brecht's *A Life of Galileo* and Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*. They attempted to "look at how Shakespeare and Shakespeare's legacy sat within the drama world" (490). However, this cultural "parallel" is highly constructed in nature. Depicting his invention of the ghost as part of the original Chinese drama highlights the "universal" nature of humanism. Chinese cultural materials are thus tailored to the discursive need to build such universalism, which underlines rather than diminishes cultural difference between Britain and China in interpreting the theme of loyal sacrifice. In this light, Fenton's adaptation of *The Orphan of Zhao* is not different from such Western appropriations of Chinese theatrical materials as *The Yellow Jacket* or *The Circle of Chalk* in the early twentieth century. They invariably juxtapose "Western" love-interests or humanism and "Chinese" cruelty or totalitarianism. At the same time when the ghost signifies the substitution of the modern and postmodern for the cultural and civilizational Chinese other, the East Asian actor who plays the ghost is meant to perform ethnic inclusion and diversity.

¹⁴⁴ See "*The Orphan of Zhao*: Interview with the Writer".

In close relations to this textual adaptation is the cover image of the play, which was published by Faber in 2012. The cover page features an East-Asian child under the background of Chinese calligraphy. The same image was also employed as an early version of the RSC production's publicity poster, which incurred similar confusion and misinterpretation by using the image to indicate the silent nature of the Chinese and East Asians, or irrelevant to the drama at best.¹⁴⁵ The seeming incongruity between the image of a modern child and the traditional Chinese drama makes sense when we identify the source of the photo and the context in which it was taken. The photo constitutes one of the 48 images that are collected under the title "Young and Abandoned: Orphans on the Verge of Institutionalization", taken by the American photographer M. Scott Brauer somewhere between 2007 and 2009 in the rural areas of Eastern China's Jiangsu Province. Brauer contextualizes his photos as follows:

The conditions inside China's orphanages are often inhumane and appalling. As a result, international and domestic charities, such as China's Amity Foundation, work to keep abandoned children out of the orphanage system, preferring instead to provide the financial assistance to make it possible for orphans to live with their relatives or other guardians in their home villages.¹⁴⁶

The Chinese boy in the photo is one of the orphans. His name is Fan Lu Yang, aged 10 at the time the photo was taken. The original background is the home of the

¹⁴⁵ See Vanessa Lee, "'In Search of the Orphan': Intercultural Theatre, Multi-Ethnic Casting, and the Representation of Chineseness on European and North American Stages," 456. See also Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "A Controversial Company: Debating the Casting of the RSC's *The Orphan of Zhao*," 431.

¹⁴⁶ Brauer, M. Scott. "Young and Abandoned: Orphans on the Verge of Institutionalization". M. Scott Brauer Photo Archive.

child's grandparents, with the boy seating himself on the bed against the wall.¹⁴⁷ Faber and the RSC's appropriation of the photo preserves the image of the boy, but substitutes Chinese calligraphy for the original background. As a consequence, what was Brauer's criticism specifically targeting at China's orphanage system in the original context changes into a suggestion of the demonizing nature of Chinese culture at large, which simultaneously registers traditional and modern China. Neither the ghost in the text nor the image of the Chinese boy intends to represent an insulting image of the Chinese (or East Asian) character as being innately passive and silent. On the contrary, Faber and the RSC production attribute this silence of the underprivileged to a totalitarian and never-changing China that is fundamentally heterogeneous to Western modernity. Reading the play's ideological assumption along with the controversy over the performance indicates that the imagination of China and the Chinese in Britain today takes place in two frameworks that are closely related but also different: the difference between the civilizational blocs of the Western and the Chinese, and the ethnic Chinese within the power relations in Britain's multi-ethnic society. It also suggests that performance presents a moral dynamic that can be independent from the text. The RSC controversy mostly happens on the level of performance in the latter framework, where the Chinese and East Asian ethnic minority communities (particularly focusing on the British East Asian acting community) reconfigure their identity with a transnational approach. Questions are: what are the connotations of transnationalism in the way they use it, in what way it helps to reimagine the notion of modernity or the social relations in Britain, how effective is this approach in practice, and whether it recreates stereotypes by accepting certain ideological assumptions about China in

¹⁴⁷ Brauer, M. Scott. "Young and Abandoned: Orphans on the Verge of Institutionalization," M. Scott Brauer Photo Archive.

civilizational terms. To answer these questions, we should examine more specific approaches employed under this transnational framework: color-blind casting and relational politics, for example. Subsequent questions include how color-blind casting functions differently in its use by different subjects in different contexts, and who are “relational” to each other at the cost of excluding whom.

China, Ethnicity and Transnationalism

It is under these circumstances that British East Asian actor Daniel York produced an all-East-Asian-cast version of *The Orphan of Zhao* as “tough and modern” as he could in direct response to Fenton’s adaptation and in direct resistance to the RSC production.¹⁴⁸ This eight-minute production develops through quick alternations between 14 narrative voices (6 male and 8 female) so that “every actor in the film would occupy their own ‘niche’ in the narrative” and that the casting “would reflect the sheer diversity of British East Asian actors normally reduced to basic archetypes of Uber ‘Chinese’ or ‘Japanese’.”¹⁴⁹ Towards the end of the film, 12 actors repeat in succession “but China could not lie”, with the thirteenth actor uttering the same sentence in Chinese. York consciously quotes this line from Fenton’s play, as in several other occasions in the film, to appropriate its meaning in a new context. In Fenton’s play, the orphan claims to his stepfather, the villain Tu’an Gu that “Cheng Ying could have lied to me. China did not lie to me” to express how the recognition of social reality discloses the dominant discourse’s distortion of history (64). The actors’ collective reference to their Chinese identity in the film unmistakably articulates the concrete presence of the Chinese and East Asian

¹⁴⁸ For this film production and for the authorial explanation, see Daniel York, “The Orphan of Zhao Redux”.

¹⁴⁹ York, “The Orphan of Zhao Redux”.

community in Britain and the under-representation of this community by mainstream media.

York strengthens this sense of inequality by restoring the subjective status of the Chinese diaspora whose history narrative subverts the mainstream discourse of progress and modernization. This approach to micro-history narrative from the diaspora perspective shows its close similarity to Fenton's postmodern invention of the ghost. York's interpretation of the play identifies Britain's East Asian community as the true orphan of the colonial history of Britain (and the West). The film ends with "Our diasporas spread across the four corners in the world, as our country struggles and rise[s] in savage flocks. My infancy was wounded by barbarism as it slept in its cradle, as now I'm propelled by cruel destiny." York's history narrative identifies inequality as an inherent part of the modern capitalist social relations and thus as a constitutive element of modernity. It also reveals that transition from the colonial to the post-colonial era initiates an evolution from diasporic to ethnic subjectivity. The new identity of ethnic Chinese in Britain is defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall 235). Diasporic Chinese identity shifts away from its Sinocentric origin and participates in the creation of a new Englishness in seeking for inclusion and ethnic diversity in the multi-ethnic environment of Britain.

It is under this post-colonial social mechanism that York's rewriting of history and East Asian community's protest against the RSC exemplify a renewed interpretation of "transnationalism": as a way to resist ethnic minority groups'

invisibility and to fight for the discursive power of self-representation. More specifically, it forms a critique of the RSC's claims that there were no qualified actors of East Asian background to play the roles.¹⁵⁰ When the RSC argues that "actors shouldn't feel obliged to take work or auditions in order to represent a community they may or may not feel part of", York makes his counter argument by calling for publicly funded institutions, including the RSC, to take up the "moral responsibility" to represent diversity on the stage in multi-ethnic Britain.¹⁵¹ Transnationalism here manifests itself through the plural form of Chinese diaspora, which points to a solidarity between Chinese communities in different geographical locations, particularly with regard to the connection between the British and the North American contexts. For example, the American Conservatory Theatre's 2014 production of *The Orphan of Zhao*, similarly based on Fenton's adaptation, used an almost all East Asian cast and featured the Chinese American actor Bradley Darryl Wong, who played the leading role as Cheng Ying. This casting decision was partly in response to the RSC production. Transnationalism also takes the form of cooperation between ethnic minorities of different East Asian origins, or even beyond to include the black and South Asian communities, based on their "shared feeling of injustice and marginalization" across places and communities (Rogers 178).

The RSC controversy is simultaneously a struggle for cultural ownership over a Chinese cultural heritage. Different approaches to the interpretation of this heritage constitute distinct positions and stances regarding Britain's ethnic relations.

¹⁵⁰ See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "Interview with the RSC's Hannah Miller, Head of Casting, and Kevin Fitzmaurice, Producer," 490.

¹⁵¹ See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "Interview with Daniel York, Actor, Writer, and Director and Anna Chen, Writer, Performer, and Broadcaster," 499.

The issue of authenticity (of Chinese theatre in Britain) in Hsiung's time in the 1930s and 1940s mostly featured textual representations and stage conventions. Hsiung's struggle for the ownership of authenticity mainly aimed to reflect racial and international relations between Britain (the West) and China. Authenticity today almost exclusively refers to the casting issue in performance. Prioritizing casting issues as *the* place to fight for authenticity obscures the RSC's reference to China as the political and cultural entity (in its negative implication). It also reveals a rupture between the Chinese as an ethnic subject in Britain and the Chinese as a national subject. York's representation of the British East Asian community's diversity by identifying with the Chinese cultural heritage is self-paradoxical. On the one hand, the 14 actors in the film display a diversity in their identity heritage. They originate from Hong Kong, mainland China, Japan, Singapore and other South East Asian heritage. This inclusiveness aims to problematize the RSC's under-representation of ethnic issues. Transnationalism here functions to establish a lateral and relational solidarity between different ethnic minorities to transform conservative notions of single-ethnic (white) nation state. On the other hand, however, York's claim of ownership of both Shakespearean and Chinese heritage demonstrates the paradox many British East Asian actors find themselves in. They are "demanding roles that are racially determined as part of a broader project of profile raising, whilst at the same time arguing that race should be irrelevant in casting" (Rogers 433). As if to justify British East Asian community's ownership of *The Orphan of Zhao*, York claims that "virtually every performer in the film has roots in China. If not, the geography of their heritage exists in direct relation to the Middle Kingdom."¹⁵² When the emphasis on the Chinese "roots" and on the close relation to the Middle

¹⁵² See York, "The Orphan of Zhao Redux".

Kingdom (a term that often invokes the orientalist concept of a traditional and homogeneous Chinese civilization) serve no more than a cultural symbol or discursive rhetoric in combating the RSC's ownership of the same Chinese cultural heritage, York's invocation of China fails to escape from Fenton and the RSC's orientalist construction of China as the political and cultural other.

Anna Chen, a Chinese British writer and performer, in her interview together with Daniel York by the *Contemporary Theatre Review*, displays a confusing definition of "Chinese". She insists that the RSC production of *The Orphan of Zhao* aims to "get Chinese money" and is a shame to both "British Chinese artists and to the Chinese people they were marketing it to".¹⁵³ In her effort to take the fight against the RSC "onto Chinese soil", she published an article "City Scope: Now Is the Winter of Our Discontent" in Hong Kong's English newspaper *South China Morning Post*.¹⁵⁴ In the article, she criticizes the RSC production by saying that it "included research trips to China and advertisements in Putonghua [Mandarin], and yet we Chinese are virtually excluded". The RSC producer Kevin Fitzmaurice has made a very different description for the same interviewers regarding the target audience of *The Orphan of Zhao* and the other two plays included by the "A World Elsewhere" season. He explains that "the audience in the Swan [Theatre, where the three plays were performed] tend to be regular theatre-goers who have probably already seen a lot of RSC productions".¹⁵⁵ Presuming the RSC's commercial motive and Chinese people's [tourists'] curiosity at a foreign adaptation of their own

¹⁵³ See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "Interview with Daniel York, Actor, Writer, and Director and Anna Chen, Writer, Performer, and Broadcaster," 500, 503.

¹⁵⁴ See Anna Chen, "City Scope: Now Is the Winter of Our Discontent", *South China Morning Post*, 16 December 2012.

¹⁵⁵ See Amanda Rogers and Ashley Thorpe, "Interview with the RSC's Hannah Miller, Head of Casting, and Kevin Fitzmaurice, Producer," 491.

traditional drama, Chen distinguishes “the British Chinese artists” from Chinese nationals by their different political consciousness. Chen’s invocation of a common “Chineseness” in the article aims to expand the transnational connection to “the Chinese soil”. However, the media through which she tries to get her idea through targets at Hong Kong’s English-speaking readership. When the claim of a common Chinese identity may connect Hong Kong into the transnational picture by recalling Hong Kong’s similar colonial history, “the Chinese soil” ultimately excludes, consciously or unconsciously, mainland China.

Location and the Imagination of China

In the Chinese context, there were two theatrical adaptations of *The Orphan of Zhao* in China in 2003, one by the Beijing People’s Art Theatre directed by Lin Zhaohua, and the other by the National Theatre of China directed by Tian Qinxin. Lin’s adaptation reconstructs the moral dynamic of the play by reconfiguring the relations between Cheng Ying, the king and the orphan. Lin foregrounds the king as the supreme political power that manipulates the rise and fall of different clans. In this changed political dynamic, Cheng Ying’s heroic self-sacrifice for justice and nation loses significance. Because the absolute political power represented by the king renders the notion of justice and patriotism problematic. They serve as ideological tools to maintain the political apparatus. In Lin’s adaptation, the orphan refuses Cheng Ying’s order to revenge by denouncing Cheng’s history narrative as irrelevant. Choosing to work for the king, the orphan is ultimately assimilated into the establishment, whose grand history narrative deconstructs the significance of historical truth and removes the presence of the national apparatus in creating tragedies. The king’s victory over Cheng Ying in explaining history foregrounds the

overwhelming discursive power of the ideological apparatus, particularly in its manipulation of history writing.

The rewriting of the revenge plot highlights the doomed individual heroism in face of the absolute power. This absolute political power firmly situates itself within the recently emerged consumer society that is seemingly in an ideological vacuum and pretends to provide diverse choices of ideas. Lin's foregrounding of this ideological apparatus functions to demystify it. It serves to critique of Cheng Ying's heroism that is too easily susceptible to political manipulation by power. This criticality reflects what David Der Wei Wang concerns to be the ongoing project in search of China's cultural modernity that connects China today back to the late-Qing and the May Fourth periods.¹⁵⁶ If modernity refers to the social relations under the modern capitalist world-system that suggests a "singular modernity", then the search for "alternative" modernities mean possibilities outside of this system: socialism for example. If Maoist China has made an effort to realize this alternative, post-Maoist China, with its deepening degree of economic globalization, seems to suggest the frustration of this effort. Cheng Ying in Lin's adaptation becomes the self-projection of the older generation of Chinese intellectuals who lived through Mao's time, particularly the Cultural Revolution. The coalition between political power and consumerism indicates the elimination of any possibility to resist. This criticality, however, carries a pessimism mediated through the perspective of the older generation of Chinese intellectuals. From their point of view, the orphan's denial to accept Cheng Ying's story and desire for revenge suggests the younger generation's failure to possess any sense of responsibility and history. Nevertheless, this dissatisfaction with the younger generation reveals the father generation's

¹⁵⁶ See Wang, *Fin-de-siecle Splendor Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction, 1848-1911*, particularly chapter 6, "Return to Go: Contemporary Chinese Fiction and its Late Qing Antecedents".

paradoxical position: they wish to speak truth to the younger generation, but the truth and the historical burden it bears simultaneously prove the absurdity of their heroism in face of the overwhelming political power. How they retell this history of political struggle and reconstruct the meaning of history, even if they were given the discursive power to speak, becomes the burning question that Lin's adaptation fails to answer. By highlighting the older generation's frustration, Lin's adaptation denies the younger generation their subjectivity.

In her National Theatre production, Tian Qinxin also rewrites the revenge plot. However, she differs from Lin by locating the focal narrative point at the orphan. Tian retells the story from the orphan's first-person perspective. Eliminating the presence of a reigning political regime, Tian's adaptation focuses on the relations between the orphan, Cheng Ying and Tu'an Gu (the orphan's stepfather, the villain who massacred the Zhao clan) and aims at discussing the morality of history narrative. The orphan can get access to two versions of history from Cheng Ying and Tu'an Gu. In the latter's narration, the political conflict that subsequently leads to the Zhao clan's decline originates from adulteration and personal revenge. Narration of serious historical and political conflicts from this personal perspective trivializes the origin of historical events and challenges the seriousness of politics. Political background is rendered irrelevant to Cheng Ying's self-sacrifice, when from his narrative perspective, the decision to save the orphan is purely to keep the promise he makes to the orphan's mother. When the two narratives finally converge to reveal the truth to the orphan that Cheng Ying has sacrificed his own child to save the orphan of Zhao, Tu'an Gu acknowledges the nobility of this self-sacrifice. The unanimous agreement with this spirit bridges any political contradiction that provides the premise of the orphan's revenge. Therefore, Tian's adaptation becomes

a moral parable through which she attempts to reconstruct honesty and mutual trust between people in an age of fierce commercial competition.¹⁵⁷ Through the orphan's first-person narration, Tian restores the younger generation's point of view. She reconstructs a possible social space for history narratives from individual perspectives and deconstructs visions of politics as absolute ideological divisions and control. This vision of politics forms a direct distinction from Lin's and reveals a generational difference in perceiving China and reimagining China's modernity. Nevertheless, in her overemphasis on the economic aspect of China's consumer society in producing social problems, Tian tends to render morality irrelevant to politics. Her deconstruction of older forms of political and ideological struggle, as in Mao's time, renders new forms of (unequal) political power relations invisible and irrelevant in China's consumer society today.

Discourses about the essential difference between Western and Chinese civilizations similarly emerge in public discussions of these two adaptations. Whether reviewers regard the blood relations, which provide the core motive for the orphan's revenge, as central to Chinese culture, or as undesirable feudal heritage, they all presuppose a contrast between Chinese and Western cultures. This stress on heterogeneity between China and the West in civilizational terms essentializes both China and the West.¹⁵⁸ This framework of interpretation bears a similarity to discourses about China in Fenton's adaptation. York's adaptation confers upon the orphan's revenge a new meaning that reveals the unequal power relations created by

¹⁵⁷ See Wang Fei, "Different Concepts and Diverse Styles of the Two Adaptations of *The Orphan Zhao*".

¹⁵⁸ For a record of the academic seminars held by *Dushu* magazine in 2003 and by the Chinese National Academy of Arts in 2004 for the discussion of these two adaptations, see Hua Yan, "Academic Debates over the New Adaptations of *The Orphan of Zhao* and Their Cultural Significance", and Lin Zhaohua, et al. "Seminars on the Two Adaptations of *The Orphan of Zhao*".

the capitalist system between the white and ethnic minority groups (with a particular reference to the British East Asian acting community). In comparison, the Chinese adaptations' rewriting of the revenge plot demonstrates ways in which modern Chinese intellectuals reimagine social relations in the Chinese context. The contrast between Cheng Ying and the orphan does not mean to simply repeat a binary opposition between tradition and modernity. It identifies the difference between stages of modernity in the Chinese context.¹⁵⁹ *The Orphan of Zhao* acquires different afterlives in Britain and China. These written Chinas in different locations provide diverse interpretations of imagining what is being Chinese. However, written China in both the British and Chinese contexts functions as a way of rewriting history. It challenges mainstream binary thinking about the East-West relations. It also reveals the injustice discourse can do to groups at the weaker end of the social relations.

Early-Twentieth-Century Transnationalism Revisited

Popular imaginations of China's connection to the English-speaking world in the early twentieth century is not confined to theatre in genre or to Britain in location. In Xue Yiwei's novel *Dr. Bethune's Children*,¹⁶⁰ the Chinese protagonist redefines his immigrant identity in Montreal by researching the Canadian doctor Norman Bethune and his motive to travel to the communist-led Northwestern China in 1938. Freeing Bethune from the image of a revolutionary icon in the official historiography of China, the novel rediscovers the "historical necessity" for Bethune's devotion to

¹⁵⁹ For the discussion of China's condition of modernity in its transition from the Mao to the post-Deng era under the background of globalization, see Liu Kang, "Is There an Alternative to (Capitalist) Globalization? The Debate about Modernity in China," 164-188.

¹⁶⁰ The novel is written in Chinese and was first published in Taiwan instead of mainland China. It was translated into English by Darryl Sterk and got published by the Canadian publisher Linda Leith in Montreal in 2017.

China as representing “the impending globalization of communism” in the 1930s (52, 29). This rediscovery of the spirit of (communist) internationalism links Bethune and history to the protagonist’s travel to Canada in the twenty-first century. Travel in both directions reveal that barriers in race, language, class and ideology still exist in both contexts. Meanwhile, it also suggests possibilities of change. The novel’s translation into English and publication in Canada represent such a route of travel that demonstrates the gain of dialogue and exchange on a transnational level.

In Taras Grescoe’s call for the substitution of “complicated relationships” for “all-leveling, all simplifying ideologies”, he rediscovers Shanghai in the 1930s and compares it to “*fin-de-siecle* Paris, Berlin in the twenties, New York in the late forties, or any other place where intense cultural ferment and the coming together of races and the meeting of civilizations has made for strange, wonderful bedfellows” (353). Although old Shanghai is a prime symbol of that treaty port system which creates explicit physical and mental barriers regarding race, class and language, it is simultaneously the birth place of a cultural cosmopolitanism to break such barriers with “a heightened sense of empathy and understanding” (353). This cosmopolitan nature of old Shanghai, according to Grescoe, is losing to the force of globalization, which reframes Shanghai in the logic of capital and in the image of skyscrapers. The racial, class, ideological and language barriers they face at various locations demonstrate that modernity, as “the way in which capitalist social relations are ‘lived’— different in every given instance” (Warwick 12), is an ongoing rather than an achieved or completed project. Twentieth-first-century writers suggest a way of cultural resistance to this globalizing force through rediscovering and endorsing the transnational spirit illustrated and practiced in the early twentieth century by writers this thesis examines.

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